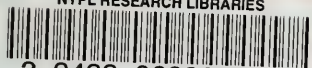


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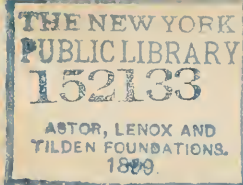
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## Errata.

Page 61, sixth line from bottom, for "executing," read—exercising.

" 125, eighth line from bottom, for "promise," read—province.

" 123, eighth line from bottom, for "him," read—them.

" 151, twelfth line from bottom, for "men," read—me.

" 166, tenth line from bottom, for "cause," read—because.

" 223, fifth line from bottom, after "that," insert—they.

" 249, tenth line from bottom, after "these," insert—they.

" 257, last line, for "any thing," read—all things.

" 261, first line, for "parable," read—parallel.

" 270, third line from top, for "then," read—that.

" 271, first line, for "ever," read—even.

" 271, ninth line from top, for "of sons," read—of the sons.

" 280, last line, for "put asunder," read—put them asunder.

" 283, seventh line from top, for "least," read—lest.

" 308, eighth line from bottom, for "is," read—in.

" 315, second line from top, for "choice," read—chosen.

" 336, last line, after "would," insert—permit any thing to exist, which.



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discourses, which were originally prepared, in the ordinary course of ministerial duty, for their improvement, are inscribed, with an humble prayer that the blessing of God may attend them, in the form in which they are now presented—

By their affectionate

PASTOR.



## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

---

*To the beloved people of my charge.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Under a permanent and unwavering conviction that we are forming characters for infinite joys, or endless sorrows, I have endeavoured, in my publick ministrations among you, to declare the whole counsel of God. I am not conscious that I have in any instance, either suppressed, or modified the truth, in accommodation to the feelings, or the prejudices, the favour, or the frowns of any man.

It has been an important point of labour with me, to have my own mind deeply penetrated with a sense of my responsibility, and with a conviction that I must meet you all, in the great day of solemn adjudication. Time has appeared too short; the glory of this world too transient and fading; eternity too near and certain in its approach; the honour of God, and the souls of men of too much value and interest; and a consciousness of my own dread responsibility has been too deep and pungent, to permit me to pursue a temporizing policy, when called to preach to you, the eternal truth of the great God.

It is not to be denied that those truths of the Bible, which charge upon man a character of utter hostility to all that is lovely in God, and amiable, and sweet in heaven, and which exhibit his responsibility and destiny, are offensive to the feelings of his heart. I have been far from supposing, however, that I might be justified on this account in suppressing them; sensible as I am that a faithful and just exhibition of them, is peculiarly adapted to awaken in the sinner a conviction of his character of guilt, and his condition of danger.

There is great reason to apprehend, that many of our fellow-men may be deceived with regard to the ground of their hope, and may think themselves reconciled to God, under such views of his character as are utterly abhorrent to his own heart. Thence, I have laboured to exhibit such views of the character and government of God, as it appeared to me he had sanctioned in his own blessed Word.

The present day is characterized by a peculiar spirit of catholicism, which may result in great good, or great evil to the Church of God. In the tendency which it has to unite the efforts of Christians in disseminating the Bible, and extending the boundaries of the kingdom of our Redeemer, it furnishes occasion for the liveliest gratitude and joy: Yet I have a very deep conviction, and not unfrequently a trembling apprehension, that the enemy may improve it to the advantage of the cause of error, by lowering through its influence the standard of Christian character; and lessening the amount of plain, faithful, and distinguishing preaching. I can unite with any set of men, in giving the pure, and unadulterated

word of God, to every son and daughter of Adam: But am I to choose a *Missionary*, an *Expounder* of the word of life? How can I consent to send a man to watch for souls, whose views differ from my own, on what appear to me to be the essential attributes of revealed religion.

That is a perversion, and an abuse of the law of love, that requires any man to sacrifice, or suppress, or modify, those views of Christian doctrine, which, from his own experience, have proved themselves rich sources of consolation to his heart, and which form the pillar and ground of his faith.

While, therefore, we look with an eye of kindness upon those who differ with us in their views of truth, let us be careful that we do not abandon "*the faith once delivered to the saints*;" and in our zeal for catholicism sacrifice those high truths respecting God and his government, without which, all the catholicism in the universe, would leave us still under the mastery of sin, and under the condemnation of God's holy and righteous law.

False views of that charity which the gospel enjoins, are natural to the human heart; and there are not wanting those in community, who, though their lives are immoral, and though they both virtually and in fact deny the only Lord God that bought them, do yet claim it as their right to be called Christians, and to be treated as such; and whose liberal catholic views would stop at nothing short of an unreserved union, with that sentiment of Pope, which places the gods of the heathen upon the same throne with Jehovah of Hosts. Be the friends of



whosoever are the friends of Jesus Christ ; unite in the kindest feelings of Christian love, with those who accord to God, the universal and undivided sovereignty of all worlds ; but avoid the advocates of that false philosophy, which would despoil and blight the glory of your Saviour, and annihilate your hope of future felicity, by robbing the redemption scheme of its most distinguishing attribute, the sacrificial, or vicarious nature of the death of Christ.

We are thrown upon times, when, although religion seems popular, there are few who can bear sound doctrine : And it can hardly be viewed otherwise, than an unhappy indication of a decline in Christian knowledge, that so many professed friends of the cause, express a chilling indifference to doctrinal preaching, and think a knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel of little moment. What is denominated practical preaching, a preaching which excludes the topical discussion of the great doctrines of the gospel, has precedence given it, by many who profess to believe these doctrines, but who, because they are offensive to the minds of impenitent men, do not think it prudent to exhibit them.

Were this the place for discussion, I would do more, than simply ask, in reply to such views—How those can hope to be happy in God, let their professions be what they may, who hate what he has declared true both of himself and of them ; And further—How they can know that they love God, and are pleased with his government, whilst they are ignorant of the character of both ?

In the discourses which are now presented to you, and which were originally prepared in the ordinary course of



ministerial duty, and without any view to publication, I have endeavoured to present some of the important truths of revelation in their practical relations and tendencies, placing the principle, and the practice founded on it, by the side of each other. What the result of this effort may be, an effort made in compliance with those solicitations of friendship which my feelings would not suffer me to resist, can be determined by that BEING, only, who employs the instrumentality of earthen vessels, to make known the excellency of his own power.

To HIS direction, "*who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,*" would I most humbly desire to commit the whole—

While I subscribe myself

Your affectionate and unworthy servant,

In Christ Jesus the Lord,

D. C. LANSING.

*Auburn, September 22, 1825.*

I have been thinking of you very much lately  
and wondering how you are getting on.  
I hope you are well and happy.  
I have been very busy lately  
but I have managed to find some time  
to write you a few lines.  
I am sure you will be glad to hear from me.  
I am sure you will be glad to hear from me.  
I am sure you will be glad to hear from me.

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## SERMON I.

---

*“ But now commandeth all men, every where to repent.”*

ACTS xvii, 30.

It is not my design, at this time, to inquire into the nature of repentance, and to exhibit, in detail, that series of moral feeling, that constitutes the essence of godly sorrow. I would only remark, that the emotion of mind, which we denominate sorrow, is the same in its nature, when produced by a conviction of sin, as when produced by any other cause. It is the sorrow of the world, and worketh death, when produced by worldly causes. It is godly sorrow, and has its issue in everlasting life, when produced by a conviction of having basely, and causelessly offended our Maker. I forbear, therefore, making any remarks, specifically, on the *nature* of repentance, whilst I endeavour to press the *duty*, and the *ability*, and *present obligation* of sinners to perform it.

### I. IT IS THE DUTY OF ALL MEN TO REPENT.

This duty is solemnly enjoined by the authority of God in the text:—“ *But now commandeth all men, every where to repent.*”

The Scriptures, elsewhere, abundantly enforce it, Jesus

Christ preached that men should repent, and he has made it, peculiarly, the duty of his ministering servants, in this particular, to imitate his example. He urged the necessity of repentance upon the Jews, in a most solemn manner, when he applied the tragical end of those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, to their case, and declared to them, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* The disciples *“went and preached that men should repent.”* *“And thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.”*

The duty of repentance cannot, from its very nature, be restricted to any definite and select number. All men are sinners. All are to blame for being sinners. Their *being sinners* lays the foundation for the necessity of repentance.—If, therefore, the duty of repentance is obligatory on one, it is so on all. If they had always loved God supremely, there would have been no ground for repentance; but, having been voluntary in their hatred towards him, it is impossible they should love him, so long as they do not grieve for their ungrateful, and wicked conduct. This is impossible, because a state of impenitency, is a state of hatred and rebellion, and these are incompatible with a spirit of submission and love. Hence, men can comply with the obligation, which all lie under, to love God supremely, only, as they exercise a deep, and ingenuous sorrow of heart, on account of sin. Whilst the whole heart is opposed to God, it is impossible, that the whole, or any part of the heart should be in love with him.

Thence it is, that what is termed the disability of sinners to embrace Christ, and love him, is called a moral disability, because it lies exclusively in the inclination ; it being impossible, that the inclination should be equally strong towards objects of a directly opposite nature. Man cannot love, what he hates ; not because he has not a capacity to love, but because he hates ; and it is a palpable absurdity to suppose, that he can, at the same time, love with all his heart, what he hates with all his heart. As all men are bound to have right feelings towards God ; and as they can then only have right feelings, when they are brought to exercise an ingenuous grief for their sins, so, the obligation to repentance, running parallel with their offences, lies upon all men.

If *all* sinners are bound to repent, then the obligation rests upon *those* who hear me. The command of the Almighty, to all men, every where to repent, is addressed as directly to you, as it ever was to any of his creatures. It is a duty, to which you are solemnly called, by motives of the most tender and impressive character. It is your Maker who calls you back to your allegiance, and to happiness ; and you are urged to submit, by every argument that can address the kind and ingenuous principles of your nature. It is a duty which you are able to perform, and for neglecting which, you are rendering yourselves daily, more and more guilty, in the eye of Heaven. This brings me to the

II. Article to which, in pursuance of our plan, I would invite your attention. **REPENTANCE IS A DUTY WHICH SINNERS ARE ABLE TO PERFORM.**

The ability of sinners, as well as their obligation to repent, appears from the fact, that God has commanded them to repent. The command presupposes an ability, that constitutes the basis of obligation ; for it is a dictate of common sense, that no one can be to blame for not doing, what he is in no sense able to do. Now if man is unable to repent, and thus, in every sense, unable to comply with what God requires, when he commands him to repent, he cannot be to blame if he does not repent. But this is not all : If he can be held to perform, only, what he is able to perform, then it is most palpable, that to require of him, what lies strictly beyond the reach of those powers that constitute him a responsible moral agent, must be inconsistent and unjust. We must conclude, therefore, since God has commanded men to repent, and has threatened them with his sore displeasure if they do not repent, either, that they are able to repent, and thence, are both formally, and actually guilty for not repenting ; or, we must adopt the only alternative, and implicate the rectitude of the Divine Being, in requiring of his creatures, under the most tremendous sanctions, the doing of impossibilities.

But, as the command to repent is in accordance with our consciousness of obligation ; as it is a duty reasonable in its own nature, arising from the perfections of God, and his relations to his creatures, it is most evidently safe, as well as rational and scriptural, how repugnant soever the conclusion may be to our corruptions, to take the side of our Maker against ourselves, and under a conviction that we are to blame for being sinners, to humble ourselves before him, and to

confess and forsake our sins, that we may obtain mercy. This, we observe, is the most safe, as well rational and scriptural course. That repentance is a commanded duty, is most obvious. It is a duty addressed to men, not under the influence of conviction, not under the influence of a change of feelings, *only*, but also, under the prevailing, and overpowering influence of moral corruption, under the control of a heart at total enmity against God. In the possession of a totally sinful character, and whilst indulging feelings of direct hostility to all that is good, does God command all men, every where to repent. Now what must we conclude from this state of facts? Are we ready to go in the very face of our own consciousness, in the face of the Bible, and charge the holy God with injustice and cruelty, by affirming, that he requires us to do, what he knows we are in no sense able to do? Shall we not rather submit to the just, though afflicting conclusion, that we might all have exercised the most ingenuous godly sorrow for our sins, long ago, if we had been inclined to acknowledge the claims of our Maker, and to submit to his authority? And that we are in our sins to-day, exposed to his righteous judgements, because we have hated instruction, and did not choose the fear of the Lord?

The attempt to avoid this conclusion, is to little purpose, by endeavouring to show, that it seems to be inconsistent with those great and important truths of revelation, that exhibit man as wholly depraved and dependent, and God as the sole efficient in the work of regeneration. It is in full view of these interesting truths, that God requires all men, every



where to repent. It is to be apprehended, however, that some, at least in the *legitimate tendency* of their views, when speaking of the disability and dependence of sinners, in connexion with the sovereignty of God in the dispensation of mercy, in labouring to avoid the unscriptural ground of Arminius, have, unhappily, carried their points so far, as to fall upon the border ground of Fatality and Antinomianism.— Whilst it should be the devout study, and faithful labour of every good man, to avoid, on the one hand, by any sentiments he may adopt, invading the prerogative of the Most High; he should be equally careful, on the other, not to exhibit any such views, as may lead the sinner to justify himself in impenitency, and enable him, successfully, to resist the most powerful and pungent appeals that may be made, to his sense of right and wrong.

The doctrine of man's depravity, and disability, has been carried to a dangerous, and we have reason to fear, in many instances, to a fatal extreme. The human family have, by some, been considered, as having sustained such a peculiar relation to their great progenitor, that in him they lost, not only the inclination, but the natural ability, also, of complying with what God requires. The advocates of these views, when pressed to reconcile the idea of a transfer of guilt, which they undeniably involve, with the moral rectitude of God, in holding his creatures *personally* responsible, and in demanding of them *present* obedience, have been far from lessening the obscurities attending their scheme, by replying, that, although, by reason of the defection of Adam, mankind



lost their *power* to obey, yet, God has not lost his *right* to command. 'Tis true, God's right to the services of his creatures cannot be vacated, so long as they possess those capabilities that are necessary to constitute them moral agents; but justice revolts at the sentiment, that there may be responsibility, where there is no capacity for moral action. If men, by the fall, lost their *physical power*, as well as their *inclination* to obey God, then, since the fall, they have not been moral agents; and what claims soever the Divine Being may be supposed to have had upon them, antierior to that afflicting event, must have become vacated, so soon as that event took place. It matters not by *what means* they became dispossessed of the capabilities of moral agents; the fact that they *are* dispossessed, and not the means by which they became so, is all that justice inquires after, to determine the great question, with regard to their individual and personal responsibility. It is not the *manner* in which creatures *become* moral agents, that constitutes the basis of obligation, but the *fact* that they *are* moral agents. Let the man who has taken the life of another, be proved a maniac, and no one is prepared to sentence him to execution as a murderer. Let it be determined, that men are as destitute of the physical power, as they are of the inclination to obey God, and the ground of their responsibility, by a master-stroke, is swept away at once; and the whole system of human actions becomes like the movement of an immense machine. It is not sufficient, that, in a more happy state, and under a more happy order of things, men once possessed the ability to obey God: To con-

stitute them the proper subjects of praise, or blame, reward, or punishment, it is necessary that they should have a *present* capacity for obedience. Whilst it is strictly just, that men should be held to do, what they have a capacity to do, it is, at the same time, obviously unjust, that they should still be held, when that capacity is lost, no matter by what means.

It is difficult to perceive, how a *consciousness* of obligation can exist, where there does not exist, at the same time, a consciousness of ability : And I do not know that I should trespass against revealed truth, to say, that it would be incompatible with the moral rectitude of God, to create a consciousness of obligation, where there does not exist, in fact, and for the time being, an ability to perform commanded duty.

It has been observed, that a present capacity for obedience is necessary to constitute man a proper subject of moral discipline. This is evident, for the plain reason, that the end, both of reward and punishment, must be lost, when there ceases to be a personal, present consciousness of the desert, both of past, and present praise, or blame : But it is contrary to the constitution of our nature to feel either praise, or blame, for the good, or evil deeds of others. To affirm that we may feel either praise, or blameworthy for the conduct of others, by what means soever the feeling might be supposed to have been induced, involves the annihilation of personal, and individual consciousness ; and throws a darkness that may be felt, over the whole system of creature responsibility, as well as over the whole moral administration of God. The sentiment, therefore, that man has lost the physical

power, as well as his inclination, to comply with the requirements of his righteous Sovereign, must be abandoned.

If what has been said be true, then, whatever disability the fall has brought upon man, one thing is certain ; that it is not of such a character, as to put it out of his power, if he were inclined, to repent of sin, to love God with all his heart, and to live a life of holy obedience.

The command given in the text, has respect to men, and contemplates them, in their fallen condition, and character, and does not look at what they were, or might have been, in Adam, when he was in a state of innocency. It cannot be supposed to have any relation to the powers, which his posterity might have possessed, previous to the fall. All was then innocency and holiness ; and to such a state, repentance was neither necessary, nor possible. The command to repent, therefore, must have respect to the capabilities of man in his fallen state, and not to those which he might have had previous to the fall.

Keep the fact in view, that the command to repent is addressed to man, contemplated in the character and condition of a fallen creature, and is without meaning, or force, in any other point of light ; and then, place by the side of this fact, the common sense notions of mankind on the subject of obligation, that there must be a capacity to obey, where there is a right to command, and we have evidence that cannot be resisted, but as we are prepared to implicate the moral rectitude of God, from the fact that he does command all men, every where to repent, that they are both able and bound to repent, and bound, because they are able.

I have laboured to establish this conclusion, my friends, not because it involves in it the destiny of some distant, and unknown people, with whom we have never had any connexion of society, or interest, but as they belong to the common family of man; but because it involves in it, in an affecting, and most solemn manner, your interest, and mine for eternity. I have endeavoured to prove, that you are both able, and under obligations to repent, under the hope, that if any of you have been ready to satisfy yourselves, in your continued impenitency, with the groundless excuse, that you *would* repent if you *could*, you might be brought, by the exhibition of the truth in relation to this subject, deeply to feel, that the terms of your excuse ought to be reversed, that you *could* repent if you *would*. Now so long as you make it the labour of your life, to shield your consciences against the influence of this truth, you are taking the most sure method, possible, to render your ruin inevitable. The plain fact, on this subject, is, that you are sinners, and consequently the enemies of God, because it is agreeable to your depraved, and selfish hearts to be so; and every ground of self-justification which you assume, can only be designed, to cover from your view, the truth, as it regards your real character, that you may pursue, with as little distress of conviction as possible, your own chosen way. I will not say that you are entirely sensible that this is your case; if you were, you could scarcely fail to be alarmed at the thought, that you are making yourselves the subjects of your own deceitful practicing. You are an easy prey to your own corruptions. With very little trouble, you are flattered

into a belief of error, by your strong propensity for sinful pleasures.

Know then, I beseech you, that God holds you under obligations to repent : All your excuses in his sight are vain. He, who has formed you, knows that you have the ability, and thence, has not only commanded you to repent, but has added, also, expressions of terror and wrath, to set commanded duty home upon your consciences with weight and power. The obligation rests upon you *now* : You are *now* as able, as you ever will be, to make a total surrendry of yourselves to HIM who died for you. Nothing that you can suppose God will do for you, at any future period, will add to those capabilities of your nature, that form the basis of your obligations. With the powers you have, you will go to the judgement, and measure your eternity ; and all that God can do for you, or will ever be able to do for you, consistently with your character, and relations as accountable beings, will not alter the nature of those powers of your physical, and moral constitution, on which your responsibilities to him are founded. But I have fallen upon the

III. Article proposed for consideration : THAT REPENTANCE IS A PRESENT DUTY ; OR A DUTY WHICH EVERY MAN IS UNDER A PRESENT OBLIGATION TO PERFORM.

Men seem very ready, in general, to acknowledge that it is their duty to repent ; but they labour to persuade themselves that they are not under a *present* obligation. When they are told that it is a present duty, and that they are without any ground of justification for their delay, they are prepared to

resist ; and for the reason, doubtless, that duty, pressed home upon them, comes into direct contact with their prevailing corruptions ; and demands sacrifices, and an immediate breaking up of sinful habits, to which they are at present, totally disinclined. So long as they can successfully silence their consciences, with regard to the claims of God upon their *present* obedience, and throw the period, when his claims upon them will have become of the nature of present obligation, into some indefinite hereafter, they are not unwilling to acknowledge the general proposition, that they are bound to repent ; but when they are told that *now* is the time, and that under the authority of God, they are commanded to give their *present* attention to the subject, the world, their desire for indulgence, and their ungracious associations unite their force, and a mighty struggle is made, to resist the influence of truth.

I would ask you now, my friends, if you are ever brought to repentance, whether you must not repent for yourselves ? Can any being in the universe repent for you ? Can any besides yourselves feel sorry for the sins you have done ? The repentant feeling must be your own exercise ; and repentance is your own work, to the full extent that God holds you responsible. He does not *require* you to do, what, under the fixed and unceasing perversity of your hearts, *ne* must do for you, if you ever *do* repent : Neither will you be any more or less guilty, because, in the exercise of his inscrutable sovereignty, he may not see fit, so to operate on your hearts as to bring you into a willing subjection to his authority. The necessity for divine influence in your case,



does not arise from any physical, or constitutional defect, but from a settled, unchanging, voluntary hostility of heart to God. This is evident from the fact, that in regeneration, the natural endowments, neither of the mind, nor of the body are changed. The change accomplished in regeneration, is uniformly spoken of as a change of feelings, a change in the views which the mind takes of God, and *thence*, a change in the conduct of the life, correspondent to these views and feelings. Men naturally hate God ; the Holy Spirit, by his influences in regeneration, excites them to love him. Their wills are naturally opposed to God ; the Holy Spirit, by his influences in regeneration, brings their wills into sweet subjection to the obedience of Christ. Thus the Holy Spirit works in them, both to will, and to do those things, to which, they would, otherwise, never have been inclined. Whatever influence God may be pleased to exert upon you, therefore, will affect neither your ability, nor your obligation to repent. Your penitential feelings, by what means soever induced, will be your own voluntary exercises.

Now have you any evidence, either from scripture, or reason, that God will be better pleased to have you repent at some future, than at the present time ? Have you any evidence to believe, that he will be more able and willing, at some future time to extend to you his gracious aid, than he is now ? His help is indeed necessary ; not, however, to give you new powers, but to change the wicked and wayward inclinations of your hearts, and to make you willing to lie down in cheerful submission at his feet. Does he any where tell you

that you cannot now repent, and that you must wait until he moves you? Does he not rather complain of your insensibility to his kindness, and of the continued enmity of your hearts, when he expostulates, "*O my people! what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.*"—All his calls and invitations are present. "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" If we are bound to hate sin, and to love God, and to live holy and obedient lives, the obligation rests upon us *now*, as much as it ever will, in any future period of our existence. The obligation arises from the nature of God, and of our relations to him: But both his nature, and our relations to him, have uniformly been the same, and will never be essentially different from what they now are. Hence, our obligation to love God, is a *present* obligation.

If what has been said be true, you are as *able* to repent *now* as you ever will be. God, also, has as strong a desire that you should now repent, as he will ever have. Are you flattering yourselves that you are not to blame for your continuance in sin, under the vain pretence that you cannot repent without his aid? He is ready now to help you, if you seek to him with all your heart, and with all your soul. He is as ready now to perform all that is necessary on his part, as you have any reason to believe he will ever be, at any future period of your lives. Can you think that he is pleased with your continuance in sin? Does it, suppose you, delight his heart, and further the designs of his mercy, to have you remain for years in rebellion against his authority and govern-



ment? Hear the reply which comes from his own eternal lips—"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, saying: How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof." "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." "When I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not."

All that God has done, to render complete the system of saving mercy, speaks in language powerful and melting; language that moves the admiration, and inspires the transports of heaven, that our adorable God and Saviour is not only ready and willing, that we should now return; but he is represented also, as contemplating with astonishment and surprise, the indifference with which his creatures treat the messages of his love. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." He has sent his servants, rising up early, and sending them, to warn sinners to escape for their life; to tell them that the threatening ruin is at their doors, and that they must make haste, or they will be overwhelmed. Last of all.

and as expressive of the fulness of his benevolence, he has sent his Son. In him, we have an *evidence* of God's hatred towards sin, and his desire for our salvation: In him, we have a *motive*, too, arising from the contemplation of his character and sufferings, as the spotless Lamb of God, and the bleeding Victim of Calvary, that addresses every kind and tender feeling of our nature, and invites us to make an immediate and unreserved surrendry of all our powers to his obedience and love.

When you reflect, dying sinner, that Jesus Christ "*was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification,*" can you hesitate to believe, that God would pardon you *now*, if you would repent? You have the evidence of his word for it that he would: But is there any thing in the Scriptures, to justify an expectation, that he will regard your tears, and listen to your cries, after years of deliberate continuance in wickedness, in the face of invitation, entreaty, remonstrance, reproof and threatening? What is your security for life?—What promise of God have you, on which to hang a single hope, that you shall live to see the period, when you will consider repentance to have become a present duty? Under the expectation that such a period will come, you deliberately resolve, *now*, that you will not repent, and continue at enmity with your Maker, and fearfully exposed to his infinite displeasure.

Ah! my friends, why not resolve *now* to repent? Why not turn at God's reproof, that he may give you his holy spirit, and make known to you the joy of his salvation? If you will not *now* turn, when God urges it upon you as your

life ; if you will still endeavour to excuse yourselves, by throwing one vain objection after another in your own way, to destroy your sense of present obligation ; if you are ready to ask, how can we repent ? or to declare that you have no ability to repent, remember, I entreat you, that the great day of God Almighty will solve all your difficulties, and let a killing light in upon your souls. “ *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks : walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have at mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.*”

The language of the text is addressed to every sinner of this audience. God knows that there is no impediment in the way of your repentance, that does not give a deeper and darker shade to your guilt. He knows that you are voluntarily in your impenitency. You know it, and *feel* it too. Your reason sanctions the claims of your Maker ; and your consciences often urge your duty upon you, with a force of conviction, that compels you to summon all your fortitude and ingenuity to resist it.

The time, upon which, in former periods of your lives, you had fixed, as the time when you would turn to God, and seek the salvation of your souls, has gone by, and yet, duty is left undone. Forgetful of past experience, you are putting the great work of preparation for eternity, still into the future. Some of you have kept crowding it, constantly before you, until time has covered your heads with grey hairs ; and many of you, there is reason to fear, will keep pushing it onward into an indefinite hereafter, until you come to the grave’s

mouth, and begin to realize, in the last trembling moments of your probationary existence, while suffering under the agony of anticipated despair, that you have deceived yourselves down to the pit. Be profited, I entreat you, my friends, by the warnings of God. Be profited, by your own experience, and the tender solicitude of your Christian friends about your salvation. Be profited, by the bleeding love, and the dying agony of the Lord of glory.

## SERMON II.

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*"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy."*

ROMANS ix, 18.

IT is God, who "*hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.*"  
A world, filled with rebellious and revolted subjects, lies at his feet. His law pronounces them accursed. As moral governour, he fixes his eye upon his law with infinite delight. He is both its guardian, and the executor of its penalty. Acting in this department of his administration, as the law knows no mercy, he can show no mercy. If, therefore, the blessing of pardon is ever bestowed upon a single subject of the apostate race of man, it must come to him in a way of pure and gracious sovereignty. Indeed, mercy, as it presupposes guilt, and ill desert, precludes the possibility of merit, and therefore, whenever exercised, is altogether an act of grace.

The whole system of pardon through Jesus Christ, is a system of sovereignty. This is taught us, not only, in the preceding context, but also, throughout the Scriptures.—Paul introduces the case of Jacob and Esau, as furnishing an

illustration of God's gracious discriminating sovereignty, "*For the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth, It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*"

God loved Jacob, because it was his purpose, or good pleasure to love him, and not because he foresaw Jacob's good works. Against a notion, so degrading to the character of God, as this, the Apostle guards the grand truth he was exhibiting, by saying, that God's purpose existed, before the children were born; before they had done, or were capable of doing any good, or evil: And that he might put to silence the ignorance of those, who might suppose, that God's purpose of mercy was founded, on the foresight of the faith, and good works of those who shall finally be saved, he adds, "*not of works,*" for then the reward would be reckoned of debt, and not of grace, "*but of him that calleth,*" and this, "*that his purpose according to election might stand.*"

The Apostle next supposes an objection, which the carnal mind might raise, against the equity of the procedure, which he had ascribed to God. "*Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*" There is no unrighteousness, in showing mercy to one, and not to another, from among those, who are all in a just condemnation. This view of God's sovereignty, is not peculiar to the scheme of saving mercy, as taught through JESUS CHRIST. "*For God saith to MOSES, I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion, on*

*whom I will have compassion.*" He then introduces the case of Pharaoh, as illustrative of the grand principle, that God saves sinners in a way of entire sovereignty. 'Tis this principle, under the form of the following proposition, that I shall endeavour to confirm.

MEN ARE WHOLLY DEPENDENT ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD FOR SALVATION.

The objections which a subtle, and cavilling ingenuity might raise, against this proposition, I shall not, at this time, attempt to meet. 'Tis sufficient, to my present purpose, to know, that the language of the text is clear, and explicit on this point; and that the capacity of sinners to obey the Divine requirements, is, nevertheless, not debilitated: 'This is evident, both from their deep, and unremitting consciousness of guilt, and from the authoritative language of God, in demanding their submission, on pain of his infinite displeasure. In pursuing my design, I would observe—

I. THAT SINNERS WILL NOT SAVE THEMSELVES.

This may be made to appear, both from scripture, and from fact. Christ says, "*Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.*" When weeping over Jerusalem, he exhibits at once, his tender concern for the salvation of its inhabitants, and their obstinate rejection of the overtures of mercy—"O, *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.*" The insensibility of the human heart to the invitations of divine mercy, and its opposition to



the authority of Heaven, is also clearly illustrated by that declaration of Christ, "*No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him.*" In these words, he did not intend to represent sinners, as under a natural inability to come to him. If this had been the case, no blame could have been attached to them for not coming: But it is evident that he considered them as exceedingly guilty. Thence, it cannot fail to be seen, that Christ considered their inability to come to him, to consist in their being unwilling to come. Their being *unwilling*, is represented as an obstacle, as formidable, as a natural incapacity would be: And this representation, does but furnish, more striking evidence of the power and extent of their corruptions, and of their dependence on the sovereignty of God for salvation.

It must appear obvious, that he, who does not do right, either, through the influence of a disinclination to good, or, through the strength and power of a voluntary propensity to evil, is, on that very account, the more to blame. And the "*cannot*," used by the Saviour in the passage above named, is designed to exhibit the fixed and settled enmity of the sinner's heart against God. The prophet Jeremiah illustrates and enforces this truth, by an appropriate comparison. He is inspired to speak of the ruin that was coming upon the Jews, and is instructed to answer them, if they should ask, "*Wherefore come these things upon us?*" "*For the greatness of thine iniquities are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye, also, do good, who are accustomed to do evil.*"



Here we see, that the power of God is supposed to be as necessary, to subdue the enmity of the carnal mind, as it would be, to change the skin of the Ethiopian, or the spots of the leopard.

Further, Christ declares, with regard to the Jews, that they "*hated*" him "*without a cause*;" and that they had "*both seen and hated, both*" him and his "Father." And he exhibits the common character and disposition of the natural heart, when he observes, that "*light is come into the world,*" and that "*men love darkness rather than light*;" and that their condemnation lies in this, that "*they will not come to the light*" In the great day of final trial, sinners will deeply feel, that they have been the guilty authors of their own ruin.

The state of facts, both as it regards the experience, and conduct of saints, and sinners, is in accordance with what the Scriptures teach on this subject. Those who indulge the hope of pardon, found that hope, exclusively, upon the sovereign mercy of God. They are ready to say, most unqualifiedly, with the Apostle, "*By the grace of God, I am what I am.*" They are prepared, with all their hearts to accord with that declaration of Christ, "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.*"

When we look at *means*, how inefficacious are they, in themselves, and when unattended with the energy of the Eternal Spirit? Under all the light that God has cast abroad upon our world, in the glorious displays he has made of himself in his word and in his works, we yet see sinners unmoved; obstinate in rebellion, and at enmity against their

Maker. The expostulations of ETERNAL MERCY, do not arrest their attention ; nor do the melting accents of a dying Saviour, soften their hearts into penitency, and enkindle in their bosoms the fire of love.

Sinners act upon the principle, that they can choose salvation, when they please. 'Tis this that makes them easy in sin. They mean, by and by, to turn to God ; but they think, that there is time enough yet : And while this purpose makes them at ease in their sins, for the time being ; it also shows, that they think themselves *able* to turn, when they please. Now as no sinners ever choose to turn, until God works in them, "*both to will and to do,*" so it is obvious, that they never will save themselves. They are never brought to a willingness to embrace Christ, until moved by the sovereign agency of the Holy Ghost.

Those, of my audience, who remain impenitent until this day, are in their sins before God, not, because means have not been enjoyed by them, in common with many who now indulge the hope of pardon ; but, because they have voluntarily resisted the overtures of mercy. They have never desired, with their whole heart, the salvation which God has to bestow ; nor will they ever desire it, unless God accompanies the very means, which they have hitherto successfully resisted, by his sovereign grace. They have resisted so long, all the efficacy there may be supposed to lie in means, and have formed so obstinate a habit of resistance, that, without special divine influence, they will voluntarily, and successfully continue to resist, and perish in their sins.

Besides, the means they will hereafter enjoy, will not differ at all in their nature, from the means they have heretofore enjoyed; and no reason will ever exist, arising from the nature of the means God will employ with them for time to come, that will have any effect, to make them choose otherwise, than they have chosen all their life before. Indeed, it is altogether probable, that whatever influence there may be supposed to be in means, will be less and less felt by them, as they go on, from day to day, in a course of voluntary impenitency. There was never any obstacle in the way of their choosing salvation, that will bear at all upon their character and condition of responsibility, besides the enmity of their carnal mind against God. He was always willing to save them. This he has repeatedly, and most affectionately told them. He has thrown himself upon their path to ruin, both in the attitude of wrath and love. He asks them through the mighty Sufferer of Calvary, "*Why will ye die?*" He invites, exhorts, entreats, threatens, and all to bring them to submit; but all in vain. They will take their own chosen way, and in that way, they will inevitably perish, if he stretch not out his sovereign arm to save.

## II. THEIR COMPANIONS IN IMPENITENCY CANNOT SAVE THEM.

Their fellow sinners could do nothing for them, even if they were inclined. They could act in no other way, under any circumstances, than as instruments: But the instrumental way, or way of means, they voluntarily resist. If other means of God's appointment have proved ineffectual, we cannot suppose, that the efforts of their fellow sinners will

be attended with success, where God has failed, when he has not accompanied the means of his appointment with his own divine energy. Sinners never feel such a desire for each other's salvation, as to move them to effort. They are altogether inclined to an opposite course. They countenance each other in impenitency. They join hand in hand, to strengthen each other in sin. It cannot be supposed, that those who will make no efforts to save *themselves*, will ever feel a tender solicitude, or labour seriously, for the salvation of others.

### III. CHRISTIANS CANNOT SAVE SINNERS.

Although Christians pray for sinners, and the ministers of Christ entreat them, yet they remain unmoved. The tender solicitude of parents, accompanied with tearful supplication, produces no effect. Their hearts are so hard, their wills are so perverse and unyielding, that the richest and tenderest, the most solemn and awful means, that God has ever employed, have been wholly ineffectual, but as they have been accompanied with the sovereign energy of his grace.

No man ever spoke as Christ did ; no man was ever capable of speaking as he did ; yet sinners turned their eyes, and ears, and hearts from him, and his preaching was attended with comparatively little success. Here we see illustrated, in a most striking manner, the inefficacy of means, when unattended with divine influence. In themselves, they are as ineffectual, as the clay would have been, which Christ used to open the blind man's eyes, to restore the power of vision, unaccompanied with the energy of the Almighty Agent who applied it.

The *necessity* of means, their inefficacy, by reason of the voluntary obstinacy of the human heart, to the contrary notwithstanding, is evident. Men must be taught what God is ; they must know something of his character, and of what he requires, to be able to exercise suitable feelings toward him. They must also possess a knowledge of their *own* character ; must see the native depravity of their hearts, and their alienation from God, to enable them to exercise such penitential feelings for their sins, as he will approve. The knowledge thus necessary, comes to them, through the means which God has instituted. It is the design of God, through their instrumentality, to convict, alarm, persuade, and melt the obdurate heart. But sinners are never effectually impressed, with a conviction of their guilt, and danger ; nor excited to gratitude, and obedience, until moved by the power of the Holy Ghost. They do not hate God, because they do not know, that they ought to love him. They do not harden their hearts, because they are insensible of the obligations they are under, to yield obedience to his will. No, it is because they do not desire the knowledge of his ways ; it is because they take no delight in his character ; it is because they are supremely selfish, and prefer their own gratification, to the honour and glory of him who created them. Under this state of feeling, all the prayers, and entreaties of Christians, without sovereign grace, are utterly unavailing. If either a saint, or a sinner should come from the grave, and preach of heaven and of hell, they would not repent. Christ has said, “ *If they hear not Moses, and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from*

*the dead.*" The benevolent energy of all the created holiness of heaven and earth combined, cannot awaken, for a transient moment, the slumbering soul of sin : Nor will the obstinate impenitent ever submit, until God speaks to the heart, and so touches the seat of opposition, as to make all give way.

#### IV. ANGELS CANNOT SAVE SINNERS.

We have abundant evidence, that angels are deeply interested in the salvation of sinners. They rejoice when one sinner is brought to repentance. The Lord Jesus employs them, as "*ministering spirits to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation.*" But all that is efficacious in their ministry, is derived from the sovereign influences of the Holy Spirit. Were their whole splendid retinue, to become the heralds of salvation, they would be no more successful in their labours, than the ministers of Christ now are, nor than Christ himself was, when he was on earth. The obdurate heart of sin, resists *all means*, until God graciously takes the work of subduing it, into his own hands. The highest, and brightest created intelligence in the universe, will expend his energies in vain, upon the soul that is under the controlling influence of sin. God alone, can fix truth upon the conscience, and melt the heart.—That men are wholly dependent on the sovereignty of God for salvation is confirmed,

#### V. BY THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S EXPERIENCE FOR SIX THOUSAND YEARS.

All that God has said in his word ; all that he has wrought in his providence : all the preaching of his prophets and apostles ; and his voice coming from heaven, through the



ministrations of our Lord Jesus Christ, has not, without the sovereign agency of the Holy Ghost, brought one sinner to bow, in melting penitency, at his feet. Those, in every age, who have indulged the hope of pardon, have ascribed it, with high, and holy triumph of feeling, altogether, to the infinitely gracious sovereignty of God; and we are taught that the holy, ransomed throng, shall shout eternally, “*Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*”—Our proposition is confirmed also—

#### VI. BY EXPRESS DECLARATIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The text itself is directly in point, “*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy.*” ’Tis his will alone, that determines him to show mercy at all; and what, besides his will, can determine who shall be the objects of mercy? The Apostle James, when speaking of the source of our salvation, declares it to be the will of God, “*Of his own will begat he us.*” This truth is very clearly exhibited in Paul’s letters to the churches at Rome, and Ephesus. He closes the eleventh chapter of his letter to the Romans, with an elevated expression of feeling, in view of the interesting truths of which he had been treating: “*O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever.*”

Salvation, throughout the Scriptures, is represented as the work of sovereign grace. “*By GRACE are ye saved, through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the GIFT of God.*” “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his MERCY he saved us.*” “*That being justified by GRACE, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*” Grace, is favour shown to the illdeserving, and thence must be sovereign. If creatures merit any thing, the reward is not of *grace*, but of debt. If God saves sinners on account of their own good doings, it is not according to his MERCY that he saves them. Mercy necessarily presupposes guilt, and desert of misery. The guilty and the miserable, then, can only be saved, through a grace, that is rich, free, and sovereign.

#### REMARKS.

1. If sinners *will* not save themselves, then, all things considered, they choose destruction. They do not choose to be lost, rather than to be saved. They do not choose and love misery. No, they have a supreme attachment to their own happiness. They exceedingly dread suffering. They tremble when they think of hell, and the lost souls of guilty men. They have no expectation, that there is any happiness amid the society of the damned. They are persuaded, that the vilest passions rage and reign, without control, among the guilty throng of finally condemned immortals: And they cannot, therefore, but feel the utmost dread and horror, at the thought of mingling with that ruthless company, where not a tender emotion ever flits across the soul, but where all



is wrath, revenge, and blasphemy, and wo. But, notwithstanding all this, they are voluntary in sin, and choose to continue at enmity against God, although they have a clear and full conviction, that their course stands connected with inevitable ruin. They do not, indeed, deliberately resolve to continue in sin, until it shall prove their ruin. This they know will be the unavoidable result, if they die in their sins ; but this persuasion does not influence their hearts to turn to God. They choose, in full view of the consequences, to continue in a course of sin, from day to day, from year to year, from one period of life to another, thoughtless of the day of death, until God takes away their souls, and they fall, to rise no more. They now think, that they can repent when they please ; and because they feel themselves to be the masters of their own destiny, they keep on venturing, and walk in the way of sin, in the very face of Heaven. The time for them to break their hearts for their iniquities, does not come. They put off, even the thought of preparing to meet their Judge, and thus voluntarily hazard their dearest interests for eternity.

2. If sinners voluntarily choose a course that exposes them, to final ruin, then they will have to blame themselves, eternally, as having been the authors of their own misery. The very principle upon which they act, while they choose sin for the present, under a full view of the consequences, will seal their lips when they shall come to stand before God. They both feel and act, as if their destiny was in their own hands ; that they can turn to God when they please ; and 'tis

this that makes them easy in sin. If for once, they were brought to see, that all their hopes depend on the sovereignty of God, they would be filled with alarm at their own vain self-dependence. They would not dare to sin, with so high a hand, and in so presumptuous a manner, as they now do. Until they become deeply convinced of this, they will never seriously set about the work of repentance. The deep seated consciousness, that they have been voluntary in their opposition to God, will follow up their eternity; and there will not be a transient moment, during their endless, miserable being, when they will so far lose a present sense of their guilt, that they shall dare to charge their Maker with being the author of their ruin. Infinite wisdom and mercy have been employed, in devising means for their recovery, adapted to their condition and character, as accountable subjects of moral government. These means they have successfully, and voluntarily resisted. And what shall they do in the day of wrath? The pungent conviction, which, in the light of eternity, shall blaze upon their minds with all the force of intuitive evidence, that they have lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation, shall make their hearts melt within them, and constrain them to acknowledge, that they are the *guilty authors* of their own misery.

3. If sinners are dependent on the sovereignty of God for salvation, then, those who oppose his sovereignty, hate their own mercies, and oppose their only hope of heaven. They know not what they do. They despise the very hand that alone can raise them up, and keep them from the burning pit.

If they *will* not save themselves ; if they can derive no help from any, or all of the created agents in the universe ; if there is nothing in the history of the world's experience, nor in the Scriptures of Truth, to encourage them to rely on their own sufficiency, who but God, if they are ever saved, can reach their case ? 'Tis his prerogative to dispose of creatures according to his pleasure, and for his own glory. In the exercise of this prerogative, he is sovereign and uncontrolled. Even the overtures of mercy, which he has made to our guilty world, do not lay him under obligations, to save a single sinner of our race. Although the voice of mercy, from the high heavens, sweetly falls upon our ears ; and we are called to admire the wonderful exhibition that is made, of vengeance, and compassion, in the scheme of saving love, yet, sinners have no *claims* on God for salvation. It would be infinitely just in him, if he should leave them to perish. The pardoning power lies with him. He dispenses it, as he pleases ; and in every exercise of it, we discover a delightful exhibition of unbounded benevolence, and sovereign mercy. That sinners are dependent on the sovereignty of God for salvation, is the only hope of a sinking world. Oppose they this sovereignty ? They are undone.

4. We learn from our subject, what sinners must do to be saved. They must throw themselves into the hands of a sovereign God. Without making any conditions, is it asked ? I reply, what conditions dare they make ? Do they merit any thing ? Are they less deserving of misery, now that God has told them, that if they will submit to him, he will raise them

up, than they would have been, had he never told them so? Are they not rather, the more guilty, seeing that they have slighted his offered mercy? Do they exhibit the spirit which God requires, when they come, and say, "Lord, thou hast promised to save us if we will submit, and therefore, we are now willing?" Can that be a disinterested submission, that brings in its hand, the condition, that heaven shall be made secure? 'Tis true, God has offered mercy: But does the offer place him in such a relation to his creatures, as puts it in their power, to lay him under an obligation to save them? Has God promised to save sinners if they will submit? Their *submission*, then, is the condition of their salvation. But the question recurs; how are they to submit? Submit to be saved? This is no matter of self-denial. Every selfish feeling of the heart would delight in this. Submit to be damned; without any desire for salvation, or any regard to the overtures of mercy? No—But submit to God's sovereignty. Be willing to be disposed of according to his pleasure. Lie at his feet. Say with Job, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*" Feel a greater regard for the honour of God, than for all created good. Seek not *heaven*, from a supreme regard to your own happiness. Dread not *hell*, from a supreme aversion to your own misery. But, both seek the one, and dread the other, from a supreme regard to the glory of God, and a supreme aversion to sin, and suffering. The great question to be decided is this: Do you know, that it is for God's glory, that *you* should be saved? And can you settle this question in any other way, than to

come, without any condition lurking in some secret place in your heart, and say ; Lord do with me as seemeth thee good ; glorify thy great NAME ? By such a surrendry, we give evidence, that we prefer the glory of God, before all other good in the universe. Thus, losing ourselves in God, and throwing our all, for time and eternity, into his bright train of glory, submitting to his justice, and rejoicing in his uercy, we cannot fail, to the full extent of our faculties, to participate with him, in the delight and complacency, with which he views the accomplishment, of the grand designs of his benevolence. Feel, O sinner, that your only refuge is the grace of God ; and come, and bow down, in humble submission, at the feet of ADORABLE SOVEREIGNTY.



## SERMON III.

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*“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

MATTHEW XXII, 14.

THE only difference that exists, between God's dealings with those who are called, and also chosen, and those who are called, but not chosen, is, that he makes the former willing to obey the call.—It is my design—

I. TO CONFIRM AND ILLUSTRATE THIS GREAT TRUTH—And,

II. TO SHOW THAT THERE IS NO PARTIALITY IN THE DEALINGS OF GOD TOWARDS SINNERS IN THIS PARTICULAR.

To show, that the reason, why those who are called, and also chosen, do embrace the offers of mercy, whilst others, under similar external advantages, do not, consists wholly in the fact, that God makes the former willing, whilst he does not the latter; and to explain what we mean, by God's making those who are chosen, willing—We would observe

1. That none would ever come to Christ, if some were not *made willing*, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The Scriptures every where assert, that the grand difficulty, in the way of the sinner's coming to Christ, is his



unwillingness. “*Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.*” Now if this is the grand difficulty, then the *change* in the sinner’s *will*, if it is *ever* changed, must be produced by the operation of some cause, different from that, which has always led him to reject Christ. ’Tis thence evident, his will being uniformly opposed to the will of God, and this being the only obstacle in the way of his accepting the offered salvation, that, if left to himself, no sinner would ever come to Christ. The Scriptures plainly maintain, that it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit, that one man is made to differ from another; and that the great work which the Spirit accomplishes for one, and which he does not accomplish for another, is, that he makes the one willing, but does not the other. “*But as many as received him, to them GAVE HE power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of BLOOD, nor of the WILL of the flesh, nor of the WILL of man, but of GOD.*” Here we perceive, that those who received Christ, are represented as having had power *given* them to become the sons of God; and that they were born, or regenerated, not by reason of any alliances of blood with a pious ancestry, nor because their fleshly, carnal, or natural will chose it; nor yet because of any power exerted, nor any solicitude manifested on their behalf, by their fellow creatures, but by the efficient energy of that invisible Spiritual Agent, whose distinctive office work it is, to bring the sinner into willing subjection at the feet of Christ.

That any of our guilty race are chosen, and effectually called, “*Through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,*



and belief of the truth," and finally persevere in holiness, unto eternal life, is ascribed, throughout the Bible, to the sovereign purpose, and good pleasure of God. "According as he hath chosen us in him," CHRIST, "before the foundation of the world." "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Christ Jesus, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Being predestinated, according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Paul, speaking to his Ephesian brethren, observes—"And you hath HE QUICKENED who were dead in trespasses and sins," and "were, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others." "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath QUICKENED us together with Christ." "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Not of works, lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained, that we should walk in them." "For it is God that worketh in you to will, and to do." From these passages, and a multitude besides, that might be named, we may learn, that God has elected, or chosen a certain number, from among the guilty children of men, as heirs of salvation; that those whom he has thus chosen, he does, in his own time and way, make willing to choose Christ as their hope and portion; and that it is the operation of his Spirit on their hearts, and that only, that makes them differ from their impenitent fellow men, who enjoy the same external advantages with themselves, and are capable of being influenced

by the same motives. Even the elect, if we may suppose the case, if they were left to themselves, uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit, would continue to reject Christ, as others reject him, and finally perish. They would never choose Christ, if God did not make them willing. Their hearts are, by nature, as much opposed to Christ, as the hearts of any other sinners; and they will cherish this opposition, until, influenced by the powerful Spirit of Grace, they are made willing to submit at his feet.

2. That all men would persist in sin, and finally perish, if some were not made willing in the day of God's power, is evident from the *experience*, both of saints, and sinners.

Every true penitent deeply feels, that if God had not interposed in his behalf, he would have continued in sin, and ruined his soul. A conviction of this truth, keeps the most improved and sanctified saint humble; and it is the distinguishing glory of the gospel, that the method of salvation which it developes, exalts God, and abases the creature. Those who have made the greatest progress in the divine life in this world, and are the most assimilated to what we have conceived will be the temper of heaven, have been the most profoundly sensible of their dependence on the rich and undeserved mercy of God; and with their hearts fixed upon the infinitely kind Author of their hopes, are ready, always, to exclaim—"Our only refuge is thy grace."

We observed, that the experience of sinners, teaches the same thing with the experience of saints, on this subject.—Sinners do not feel themselves compelled to reject the offers

of mercy, through Christ. When the Saviour is urged upon their acceptance, in the most tender, and persuasive manner, and they reject him, and know when they do so, that it is at the hazard of their souls, they do not seek out some solitary place, where they may go, and pour out their tears before God, because they are in such an unhappy state of bondage, that they feel themselves compelled, contrary to their wishes, to reject that blessed Saviour, who is the joy and song of saints and angels. Where is the sinner to be found, who, having rejected Christ, and treated the gospel with contempt, has gone away, and in the bitterness of his soul complained, that in direct contrariety to every feeling of his heart, and every purpose of his mind, he could not refrain from blaspheming the Saviour, and scandalizing the Cross? So far otherwise, is the lamentable state of facts, with the sinner, that if he were restrained from openly violating the laws of Christ's Kingdom, he would consider it an abridgment of privilege, and would vent the malignity of his soul, in secret places, against the God that made him. And what does this show, but, that the heart, unrestrained and unsanctified by the Holy Ghost, would persist in its enmity and rebellion against God, and his government, and render its final ruin certain?

Sinners, not unfrequently, manifest the bitterest hostility to the truth, when closely pressed with arguments, or when urged, by the terrours of the Lord, to embrace Christ, and fly from the wrath to come. They will sometimes treat their best friends with great unkindness, not to say cruelty,

when affectionately, and tenderly entreated by them, to attend to the all-important concerns of their souls. All this evinces, not only, that they are voluntary in sin, but also, that they are so tenacious of their privilege, to accept, or reject the Saviour of the world, as they please, that they will not unfrequently break friendship with those, who, they cannot but know, are influenced by the most sincere regard for their immortal welfare. Eternal ruin would be the common portion of the human family, if God, in mercy, did not choose some to everlasting life, and make them *willing* in the day of his power.

It has been observed, that God's making his people *willing* to accept of offered mercy, lays the foundation for the difference there is between *them*, and those of their impenitent fellow men, who have enjoyed the same external advantages, and yet continue to cherish feelings of hostility towards their Maker. By his making his people willing, cannot be meant, that he compels them to embrace the Saviour against their will. This would not be making them willing, but destroying their wills. There could, under such circumstances, be no virtue attached to their actings; for of what emotions of mind soever, we might suppose them capable, they would be merely mechanical emotions, and all foundation of praise, or blame, would be annihilated. The idea of forcing the will, as if it were capable of being acted upon by a physical energy, is unscriptural, unphilosophical and absurd, unless we are prepared to adopt the principle, that the whole moral, as well as natural universe is one vast

system of machinery. The mind is a moral subject, and to sustain a relation of responsibility, to the great Author of being, can only be acted upon by a moral energy. I apprehend it is well said, that the will is always determined, by what appears, all the present, existing circumstances considered, to be the greatest good, or the most desirable object of choice. The will being thus determined by motives, and these always lying without the will, and not being under its control, that motive, to which God, by his invisible agency, gives the preponderating influence, determines the objects of choice. Let it be remembered, that moral liberty does not consist in a power in the will to originate its own motives to action, a thing both absurd and impossible, but in choosing, amid the variety of motives presented, such as appear to the mind, the most important, under the circumstances of the case. A higher liberty than this cannot be affirmed of men, nor angels. A higher liberty than this, is incompatible with the perfection and government of God. This liberty leaves every man to choose as he pleases, under the circumstances in which he is placed, by the Supreme Disposer of all events; and to desire to control these circumstances, so as to suit our own convenience, or caprice, is impiously to wish, to step into the throne of the Eternal, and settle the order of nature. If man has all the liberty that is possible to him as a dependent being, then, to wish for a different degree, or kind of liberty, is certainly indicative of a spirit of insubordination to his Maker, that would unhesitatingly invade his almighty prerogative.

By what means soever it may be, that God makes his people willing, and thus distinguishes them from those sinners, who persist in rejecting Christ, he neither imparts to them, on the one hand, a higher liberty, as moral agents, than they had before, nor does he, on the other, impair their liberty.—He operates upon them, on the same general principles, upon which he operates, and has ever operated upon all his accountable creatures. As he does not increase, nor impair the moral freedom of his people, by the influence which he exerts upon them, in making them willing, so neither does he destroy it. Making them willing, is not making them machines ; making them willing, is not destroying their wills.—What God does to make them willing, ensures, and renders certain, their free and unconstrained choice of salvation, through the Redeemer. He works in them, both *to will*, and *to do*. He so exhibits the beauty of holiness to the mind, and gives such effect to the exhibition, by his own invisible and efficient energy, that the elect sinner chooses it, as that, which appears most lovely, and the greatest, and most desirable good to his soul. He is as voluntary and free in doing this, as ever he was in any act of choice. 'Tis now the delight of his heart to choose Christ as his portion, as it was once his delight to go after the pleasures of the world ; and he rejoices, and is happy, in that he can commit his eternal destiny into the hand of his mighty Redeemer. He is now under no more restraint, as it regards the feelings of his heart, and the objects of his choice, than he was, when under the influence of unmingled selfishness and sin. He acknow-



ledges, with gratitude, that it is God alone, who has opened his eyes to see the truth, and disposed his heart to embrace it. He never feels, for a moment, that Christ has been violently obtruded upon him, and that his liberty as a moral agent has thereby been invaded. With his present views, he would choose Christ a thousand times over, although the world besides should treat him with scorn; and for the love which he bears towards his adorable Saviour, would for ever forego, all other hopes and joys.—We shall endeavour now to show—

## II. THAT GOD IS NOT PARTIAL IN HIS DEALINGS WITH SINNERS IN THIS PARTICULAR.

If sinners did for once deeply feel, that they never receive a single blessing at the hand of God, on the ground of merit, but that all the good they enjoy, or can anticipate, is the result of mere grace, they would never charge the administration of God with partiality. He who has a benefice to bestow, has a right to select, the objects of his bounty. He is under obligations to none, and we always feel, that he may do with his own what he pleases. He may be wise, or unwise in his selection, and the effects of his procedure, may be favourable, or unfavourable to the interests of others. But the infinitely wise God in executing his prerogative of gracious sovereignty, looks with supreme delight upon the good of the universe, and bestows the blessings of his grace, in accordance with the dictates of unbounded benevolence.

God is not chargeable with partiality in imparting his saving influence to whom he will—

1. Because he is under no obligation to show mercy to any sinner from among men. It will be acknowledged by all, that if God should withhold salvation from every individual of mankind, they would have no just cause to condemn his procedure, so far as regards their own personal deservings. The most sanctified saint feels, and in his daily prayers acknowledges, that if God should utterly refuse to hear, and answer, and save, he would be righteous ; and I apprehend there are few *sinner*s, in a gospel land, and who are not gospel-hardened, who would not be ready to say, that God would do them no injustice, if he should cast them off for ever. It requires more presumption, and daring, than is common even to bold offenders, for sinners to say, or think, that they have a right to demand salvation at the hand of God. The great amount of feeling, among mankind, is altogether of a different character. This is evident, from the fact, that men, generally, who have no hope in Christ, are afraid to die. They tremble in the prospect of the judgement. The scenes of the last day, as described in the Bible, awaken in them alarming apprehensions, and they feel the need of some change of character, as a preparative for the eternal world.

'Tis most clear from the Scriptures, and in this, their decision is in accordance with our own convictions on the subject, that God is under no obligations to save any sinner. If this be so, and it be true, also, that none can deserve salvation, but that in strict justice all deserve destruction, God cannot be charged with partiality, if he extends mercy to some, and not to all. He does not treat those, who are left to perish in



their sins, otherwise than they deserve. Their desert of punishment is not the less just, because others, equally deserving of punishment, are pardoned. The nature and desert of sin, in *one*, is not altered, because *another*, equally guilty, has been brought to repentance, and has received forgiveness. 'Tis the prerogative of God to pardon whom he will. His pardoning *one*, does not give another a claim to pardon, or justify him in charging his Maker with partiality. If in pardoning one, God should lay *more punishment* on another than he *deserves*, even *this* would not be an act of partiality, in the ordinary acceptation of the term; but it would be an act of injustice, because the punishment would not be proportionate to the crime. But in the case now supposed, the difficulty would not arise from the act of pardon towards the *one*, but from the act of injustice towards the *other*, there being no possible connexion between the act of pardon, and the act of injustice, in the two cases.

But we know, that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and that he will not treat the guilty, otherwise, than they deserve. It will not add to their sufferings, because God has pardoned some, as it would not have diminished their sufferings, if he had pardoned none.

2. All the reasons that we have a right to assign, why God chooses some to salvation, and passes by others, are of such a nature, as to make it evident, that he cannot be charged with partiality in this procedure. He does not choose some, because they are better by nature or practice than others.

He does not choose any because he foresees their repentance, faith, or obedience. These are every where represented in the Bible, as the evidence, and not the cause of their election. Neither does he elect any to salvation, without regard to their personal holiness, that is, whether they be holy or sinful. If the elect did never love holiness, nor walk in God's appointed ways, they could not be saved.— They are “elect through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and belief of the truth.” If therefore, we may suppose, that those who are chosen will not repent, and believe, there can be no hope that they will be saved, as they do not exhibit those characteristick marks of sanctification which are the indispensable evidence of their election; and if those, who may not be among the number of the chosen of God, would repent and believe, they have the word of God for it, that they should be saved. There is nothing in God's purpose of election, that renders it impossible for any sinner to repent, nor that in the least effects his powers and responsibilities as a moral agent. There is nothing within the compass of the moral government of God, nor in any part of his economy, with regard to fallen creatures in our world, that prevents their repenting, and being saved, besides their own unwillingness. It is as easy for them to be sorry for sin, as committed against a holy, benevolent and merciful God, if it were not for the fixed and settled enmity of their carnal mind, as to be sorry for any thing else: And if their voluntary opposition to God, is the only difficulty; and if, as is the fact, the whole amount of their

guilt lies here, can they fault God, if he lets them take their own chosen way?

We have only, as yet, assigned some reasons, that do not influence God, to choose some, and pass by others. The only assignable reason, of an affirmative character, that he does choose some, and not others, may be given in a few words. It is the *good pleasure of his will* to do so; or to use the language of the Saviour, it is the "*Even so Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.*" In all this procedure, we can find no point where the blessed God can be charged with partiality.

#### REMARKS.

1. Sinners cannot complain, that God does not make them willing. They do not desire to be made willing. So far from it, that they take all imaginable pains, to destroy the influence of motives upon their minds, and to render the most tender, and impressive means inoperative. They cavil against the truth, knowing it to be the truth, and that it is supported by evidence, and enforced by sanctions of the most powerful, and solemn nature. They resist the convictions of their own consciences; and to rid themselves of serious thought, not unfrequently, plunge into the world, and run into unwarrantable and dangerous excesses. Instead of being anxious to come to Christ, they are afraid of putting themselves under the light, and influence of religious instruction, and thus avoid, as much as possible, all the means of conviction. They often labour to harden their hearts. They unite with the trifling, the witty, and the gay, that they

may be sustained in their feelings of hostility, to God and his truth. Now as this is their own chosen way, can they complain, if God should suffer them to go on, and stumble, and fall, and perish?—

2. Sinners are as voluntary in rejecting Christ, as they would be, or could be, if not one of the human family had ever been ordained to life. This they cannot but know. Nay, it is virtually acknowledged by the feelings of heart which they indulge, with regard to this subject; and in the diversified, and opposite means they employ, to rid themselves of a sense of obligation, and to quiet their consciences in sin. Do they wish to deny the doctrine of creature responsibility, that they may be relieved from the dreaded apprehension of future wo? They become such high toned advocates for predestination, and election, that they might dispute the claim for precedency, with the stoicks, in their absurd notions about eternal and irresistible fatality. Do they desire to disparage the Bible, and to cherish their feelings of independence on God? They will affirm that the doctrines of eternal decree, and election are incompatible with the moral freedom, and responsibility of creatures, and are thence both absurd and inconsistent.

That some are chosen to life, and are made willing to embrace the overtures of mercy, does not at all affect the liberty of others. The great things that stand connected with the salvation of the soul, are as open to them, as if no such appointment unto life existed, in favour of any. This makes it, neither more, nor less difficult, nor easy for them.

to embrace, or reject Christ. They could not reject him more freely than they do, nor more with all their hearts, if every son and daughter of Adam, were left to perish. They act out, as fully, and entirely, the unconstrained feelings of their hearts, as if there never had been an election according to grace. They cannot be laid under a necessity of *hating* God, because their friends, and neighbours about them, *love* him. It might reasonably be supposed, that in the fact, that *others* love him, they would find an inducement to love him *themselves*, instead of a ground of complaint, and a reason that they should hate him the more.

Why do any of you, my dear impenitent friends, oppose the sentiment, that gives to God the prerogative, of imparting his saving Spirit, to whomsoever he pleases? The broad principle, is almost universally granted, that if any are ever saved, it must be, by the rich, and special favour of God: And can his creatures have a right, so to interpose, as to lay him under an obligation, to bestow his grace upon all, or upon none? Who would presume, unblinded by prejudice, and uncontrolled by the influence of a corrupt, and selfish heart, thus to dictate his Maker, and mark out the course which he must pursue, to maintain the dignity, and impartiality, and consistency of his character? How do you know, but that in the counsels of God's electing love, *your* salvation may have been determined on? This is certainly possible; and the simple fact, that it is *possible*, renders it certain, that you are resisting, what may eventually, prove your own highest, and eternal good. Whilst you reject the Lord Jesus

Christ, and cavil with Bible truth, you give evidence, that you are not of the number of God's chosen; and your opposition, as it renders your characters more odious, in the eyes of the holy and perfect God, has, also, a solemn, and tremendous bearing, upon the future, endless destiny of your souls. Being among the number of those who are called to *repentance*, have you ever made the experiment, by seeking to humble yourselves before God, that you might learn, whether you are not also, among the number of the *chosen*? Conscious, as you must be, that you ought to love God, and that he will not cast off any that fear him, have you ever set out, in earnest, to seek him with all your heart? or, have you not rather, kept yourselves busy, about concerns foreign to your salvation, and turned off your attention from yourselves, and your soul's eternal destiny, by constantly cavilling, with those great truths of the Bible, on which his people have founded their everlasting hopes? Look seriously, *now*, I entreat you at this inquiry, as it will, most assuredly, constitute a subject of solemn thought, in the day, when you shall stand before your Judge.

But it may be that you will say, that the sentiments now exhibited, are unfavourable to the use of means. This, however, cannot be, if they are true, because God, by most solemn methods, urges the use of means upon us. The Bible presents these sentiments, and the most active efforts of creatures, in a combined view. "*Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.*" Here



the encouragement to exertion, is founded on the fact, that God works in man, "*both to will and to do.*" And this, indeed, furnishes the only sure ground of hope, in the use of means, if it be true, that *none* of the human family would be disposed to seek salvation, and thus would perish eternally, if God did not graciously interpose to rescue *some*.

Let it be remembered, that with these sentiments, full in his view, God has said, "*Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.*" By your opposition to the Bible, therefore, by your rejection of the Saviour, whatever may be the state of facts, in relation to those truths of revelation, which you oppose, you are establishing your own character and destiny, with a most fearful, and tremendous certainty, for final ruin. You know, after all, my dear friends, that you are free to choose for yourselves, the course you will take ; and your deep seated consciousness of guilt, tells you, that if you perish, the blame of your ruin will lie, for ever, upon yourselves. You know, that nothing hinders you, from obeying the gospel call, but your own unwillingness ; and if, under all the light, which heaven has poured upon your path, and under all the privileges you enjoy, you persist in sin, in the day when God shall rise up, and visit, you will be speechless ; and when he shall say, "*bind them hand and foot, and cast them into utter darkness,*" the holy throng around his throne, following you with their eyes, to the place of your wo, will lift up their voices, and say—"AMEN! ALLELUIA! THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH."





## SERMON IV.

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*“ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”*

EPHESIANS iv, 18.

THE apostle, in the foregoing context, exhorted the Christians at Ephesus, to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith they were called, that by their life and conversation, they might show forth the holy nature, and benevolent tendency of the religion which they professed. He exhibits the importance of their living together, *“ With all lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* And this he urges upon them, both as appropriate, and requisite, because *“ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as they are called, in one hope of their calling.”* He appears, also, to invite them, to a diligent improvement of the means of instruction and knowledge, with which Jesus Christ had furnished his church; and presents, as an excitement to persevering effort, the end for which their Lord had furnished his people with these important

advantages : “ *And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ; that we, henceforth, be no more children, tossed to, and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.*” Looking, therefore, at the nature of your obligations, at the character of him who hath called you, at the high and holy end of your vocation, and the adaptedness of the constituted means to the end contemplated, “ *I say and testify in the Lord,*” adds the apostle, “ *that ye, henceforth, walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind : Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*”

In these words, the apostle clearly teaches, that the renewed Gentiles had a discerning of religious truth, and moral obligation, which the unrenewed Gentiles had not ; That the understanding of the former was enlightened, and the understanding of the latter darkened.

The text may be resolved into the following proposition.

SINNERS, BY REASON OF THE MORAL CORRUPTION OF THEIR HEARTS, VOLUNTARILY DARKEN THEIR OWN UNDERSTANDING.—

In discussing this proposition, I shall attempt to show—

I. THAT SINNERS VOLUNTARILY DARKEN THEIR OWN UNDERSTANDINGS.

II. THAT THEY DO THIS, THROUGH THE BLINDNESS, OR MORAL CORRUPTION OF THEIR HEARTS.

I. SINNERS VOLUNTARILY DARKEN THEIR OWN UNDERSTANDINGS.

In contemplating this branch of our proposition, I would remark—

1. That there is no *defect of intellectual capacity* in sinners. Religion does not impart intellect. A man of very wicked principles, may, nevertheless, be a man of great original endowment, and great mental improvement. Religion respects the heart; and although a good heart, by regulating those appetites, in the indulgence of which, men often impair their minds, is of great service in the investigation of truth, and will not unfrequently lead a man to discover moral relations, and duties, which would be unnoticed by one who feels no regard for religion, yet *wicked men* are capable of making large advances, in the various departments of the sciences and the arts. They may be great philosophers, profound jurists, skilful metaphysicians, eloquent orators, and fine poets and painters. They have abundant capacity, to reach any reasonable height, in intellectual attainment, by proper application, and when circumstances are favourable.

Their capacity for improvement in physical science, and in political and social economy, qualifies them, if they felt disposed to apply their powers to the subject, for the discovery of moral truth, also, and of the nature of their obligations to

God. They are as capable as any other men, of the same measure of endowment, of learning what God is, and what he does, and what he requires. THESE SUBJECTS stand connected with their proper elements, as well as those that exclusively command the efforts of the men of the world : And men are as capable of premising, deducing, and concluding with regard to them, as any other subjects that address a claim to their attention.

'Tis not for want of a capacity to know God, that men are ignorant of him. This they have in common with those of their fellow men, who have attained to the knowledge of God. They are fully capable of coming to the conclusion, by applying their minds to the subject, that God exists ; and that he is a being of moral rectitude. Intellectually, they know much of God. That he is a holy God ; that he is wise, and benevolent ; that he is the universal moral Governour : And although their hearts are opposed to him, when they contemplate the uncontrolable sovereignty of his administration, yet, their natural understanding teaches them, that he cannot be God, if he has no wise plan of operation before him, or if, in any instance, his holy and benevolent purposes may be frustrated. Their natural capacities qualify them to see, that God must be of one mind ; that he establishes the succession of events, during the revolving periods of endless progression and being ; and that with him, there can be nothing like chance, or contingency.

As they are able to discover, by a proper improvement of their powers, what God is, and does ; so are they capable of

discovering, the relations they sustain to him, and the obligations that result from them. They know that God is their Maker ; that he holds their life in his hand ; that his providence sustains them, from day, to day ; that his character is such, as challenges their approbation, their confidence and esteem ; and that he is pleased with holiness, and displeased with sin. Knowing all this ; how can they be indifferent to the interests and claims of truth, without giving just cause of offence to their Almighty Creator ?

2. There is no natural deficiency of moral feeling, or consciousness of obligation in sinners. They are, not only, capable of *perceiving* the righteousness of God's claims, upon their obedience and love, but they are, also, capable of *feeling* the *force* of his claims, if they will open their minds to the conviction of truth. God has endowed them, both with intellectual capacities, and moral feelings. He has given them the power of *discovering* truth, and of being *influenced* by it. The mind perceives, and the conscience feels. Thus, in our physical and moral constitution, God has two witnesses, that will support his cause, against every impenitent sinner, in the day when he shall come to judge the world.

There are very few sinners, who are not ready to acknowledge that they know their duty, and who do not, occasionally, deeply feel their guilt for neglecting it. But multitudes have made such acknowledgments, and yet, have never been influenced to the love and obedience of God ; and have gone down to the dead, with enmity against him, in their hearts. And it is not at all improbable, that some of those who hear



me, who now so readily confess their guilt, and view their confession as a kind of an atonement for it, and who, by these means, are multiplying testimony against themselves, that shall vindicate the righteousness of God, in their final condemnation, will go to the judgement, the impenitent enemies of that Almighty Being, who holds in his hands, their high eternal destinies. Let sinners feel, that both their understandings, and their consciences will testify against them, in the great day of solemn adjudication; and that they will not find within themselves, any means, of mitigating the agony which shall heave their bosoms, at the recollection, that they have slighted the mercy of heaven, and have perverted and abused, those powers of their nature, that were given them for their salvation, and not for their destruction.

3. The understandings of sinners are not darkened, for the want of opportunities of acquiring the knowledge of God, and of their duty. God has given them great opportunities to improve their powers and faculties, in the attainment of that knowledge, with which their happiness, for both worlds, is intimately connected.

Having given them the capacity of discerning between right, and wrong, between truth, and error, in the circumstances, in which he has placed them, and under the various relations which he has created; he furnishes them with abundant opportunity to *manifest* their views and feelings. No man can say, that he has no opportunity to do good, in such a world of sin, and suffering, as this is. Does he desire to give expression to his feelings of reverence for God? Added to



the means he has, of doing this, by his own personal obedience, is the opportunity, almost daily, furnished him, when he sees the name, and institutions of God profaned, of bearing his testimony against it, and of thus vindicating the honour of his Maker.

In his intercourse with his fellow men, he can always manifest his regard to justice ; and on every occasion, express his approbation of right, and his abhorrence of wrong. After the example of his Saviour, surrounded as he is, with guilt, and want, and wretchedness, he can go about, from day, to day, doing good. Poverty supplicates relief, with pale, emaciated countenance ; guilt with haggard, downcast look, invites his pity and his prayers ; and the honour of his Lord and Saviour, whose name is every day blasphemed by the wicked, looks to him for advocacy, and defence.

God has so constituted things in the natural world, that he has furnished man with an opportunity, not only, of providing a competency, to supply his individual wants, but also, of laying up in store, for those who may come after him. The necessities of nature, never press so hard upon men, as to make it impossible for them, to render to God the service which he requires. A comparatively small amount of labour, with suitable care, will secure all that is necessary to man, during his short journey through time ; and if his heart were rightly affected, towards divine and eternal things, he would find, both time and opportunity to make great improvement in the knowledge and love of God. Men seem to find opportunity enough, to do every thing else, except their duty

towards their Maker. It costs them, comparatively, but little trouble, to find the means of gratifying, almost every desire of their hearts. On subjects that stand connected with the accomplishment of favourite earthly projects, they are wise in expedient, and prompt, and efficient in execution. They, not only, see the connexion between means, and ends, but, are diligent and persevering, also, in the use and improvement of means, *to ends*. They take *enlarged*, and *correct views* of those subjects, that seem to them, to stand connected with their *earthly* happiness ; and if they thought God, and Christ, and heaven, and eternity, and their souls, were as important objects of pursuit, as the various worldly projects that command their attention, it will not be presumed, that they would complain, for the want of time, or opportunity, to indulge the feelings of their hearts towards these objects. Men find time, and opportunity to do many things, that are both useless, and wicked. Why can they not find time to pray, to read the Scriptures, and to serve God, in the ways of his appointment, as well ?

It will afford little consolation to a sinner, on a dying bed, to reflect, that he has suffered the world to press him so hard, as to have led him to neglect, both God, and his own soul. What master of a family is there, who, if he has veneration enough for his Maker, to think it of sufficient importance, cannot so regulate his affairs, as to make it a part of every day's business, to pray in his family ? And how will the excuse appear before God, if he should ever dare to say to him in the judgement, "O Lord, I was so pressed by the

world, my cares of earth were so distracting, that I could not find time to pray to thee?" Who is there, that is not prepared to say, that the concerns of his soul, are of infinitely greater importance and value, than ten thousand worlds like this? And yet, what else will the sinner have to say, in the last day, than, that for the love of what the world offered, he was pressed, and hurried, from one thing, to another, to the neglect of Christ, and his own salvation? Will any, have the presumption to say, and especially, they, who have been favoured, with such advantages, as you, my friends, enjoy, that it was for the want of time and opportunity, to give their minds up to the subject, that they remained in ignorance of God, strangers to the pleasures of holiness, and that they must, consequently, now, become eternal outcasts from heaven, and glory?

Paul represents *all men*, as without excuse, for their ignorance of God. "*For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood, by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse; because, that when they knew God, they glorified him not, as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*"

These things were spoken of the *heathen world*: What excuse, then, will those have, for their ignorance of God, and their indifference to his authority, to whom he has given his written will? Those who live in a land of Bibles, and under a preached Gospel, above *all people*, will be inexcusable, for

the darkness of their understandings, in relation to God, and duty, as it will be impossible for them, to offer any reason for their darkness, that will not enhance their guilt, a thousand fold. In the Bible, God clearly exhibits himself, and declares his will. Here, he sets forth, the Lord Jesus Christ, amiable in condescension, benevolent in his purposes, and majestick in the sufferings, necessary to their accomplishment. In him, we are called to admire, the brightness of the Father's glory, and to contemplate, the express image of his person. In the Bible, God shows man to himself, acquaints him with his obligations, points out to him his destiny, and sheds the light of eternity, upon his pathway in time, that he may learn how to order his footsteps aright, and to make for the city of God.

It will be far more tolerable, to have lived, and died, under the night of paganism, than to have enjoyed the full blaze of gospel day, and to have remained, unenlightened, and unblest, by that knowledge of God, and our Saviour, which has connected with it, the blessedness of eternal life.—We observe—

4. That there is no want of motives, to induce sinners, to apply their minds, to the subject of their duty, and their destiny. These are very numerous, and of the most impressive and tender, as well as of the most awful and alarming character. They arise from contemplating the nature of God ; the moral rectitude of his government ; the wisdom, and benevolence of his designs ; the condescension, and glory of Christ ; the adaptedness of his mediation, and intercession, to a world of moral agents, in the condition, and possessing

the character, of those of our world ; from the deep-seated consciousness of our own guilt, and desert of misery ; from the threatened agonies of the second death ; and from all that is inviting, and engaging in the society of heaven, and in the song of glory.

In that desire for happiness, which is natural to man, and inseparable from every thought, and feeling of his soul, we find a most powerful incentive, to pursue such a course of conduct, and adopt such views, as may seem best adapted to promote our future, eternal well-being : And although unsanctified men suffer themselves to be influenced by the greatest *apparent*, instead of the greatest *real* good, yet, this very principle, the desire of happiness, fills their minds with restless anxiety, even, when they give themselves up, to the guilty pleasures and pursuits of the world ; and they seldom, if ever, resolve on present indulgence, without, at the same time, promising themselves, future repentance and amendment.

In addition to all this, we are warned, and urged by the providence of God, to secure to ourselves the hope, and the blessedness of heaven, in almost every step of our pathway to the grave. We live in a world of change, and disappointment, and suffering and death. The symptoms of our own approaching dissolution, which we almost daily feel ; the fears and alarms which agitate us, as we are advancing upon our end ; the strong desire we have, for life and being, when time shall close ; the solemnity of the parting scene, when friendship sleeps to wake no more, and the tenderest ties of nature are dissolved, all urge us to fix our hope



on God, and to repair, to that divine source of consolation and support, which we know to be unfailing, as well as adapted to our necessities.

Can it then be doubted, from all that has been said, that sinners voluntarily darken their own understandings? They do not reason wrong about God, and their own duty, from *necessity*, nor because, they have not both the capacity, and the means of reasoning right, but from *choice*. They do not like to retain God in their knowledge, therefore, their understandings are darkened, in all those things that relate to the character, and doings of God as moral governour; and in all that relate to their own character, and responsibilities, as moral agents. Hence, when they speak of God, they reason falsely, about his attributes, his government, and his law. Although they know, that it is essential to God, that he should be the supreme Sovereign; and that it would be casting reproach, both upon his wisdom, and benevolence, not to suppose him to act, in pursuance of a settled eternal purpose; yet, that he does, or can so act, and still, consistently, hold his creatures responsible, they will not admit. They reject a truth concerning God, which their understandings clearly perceive, because they affect, not to be able to see, how such a truth can be accordant, with their consciousness of responsibility, whilst, at the same time, they never stop to inquire, how they can be responsible to God, if they can act, independently on him.

They know, also, that there is a difference, between right, and wrong. That the one deserves to be approved, and the

other to be abhorred ; and that it would be an impeachment of the moral purity of God, to suppose him capable of approving of sin ; yet, they affect, not to be able to see, how it is consistent for God, as a being of infinite goodness, to punish sinners eternally. They do not stop to ask, where we should find evidence of the goodness of God, should he extend the like treatment towards John, and Judas, and towards the steadfast, and fallen angels. They know, that if the world is supposed to be under the control of contingency, and chance, it is impossible to conceive, how men can be the subjects of moral government, and responsible for their conduct ; yet, they will not admit, that God exercises a particular providence over the affairs of men ; and so, after all, they throw the individual destinies of mankind, into the hands of a blind, and undefinable fatality.

Thus, sinners are constantly at war with their own understandings, and consciousness. They know the right, but will not believe and love it. They force themselves into the darkness, because the light troubles them. They labour to prove that true, which they wish might be true, but which, at the same time, they know to be false. 'Tis the sum of all their efforts, because they desire to have it so, to make God, altogether such an one as themselves. They are ready to think, that *they* would not inflict perpetual suffering, upon the worst enemy they have in the world ; and thence, they conclude, that God, who is all goodness, cannot punish sinners. They are not sensible, how much they are controled, by a selfish regard to their own happiness, when they judge so



favourably of the tender mercies of their own hearts. They do not remember, that God is not influenced, by such passions, as pervert the judgement, and control the actions of creatures; and that he is governed, in all that he does, by a benevolent regard for the good of being; and exhibits his benevolence, by treating every moral agent in the universe, according to his real character and demerits.

It is not difficult to perceive, that men, who thus delight in deceiving, and being deceived, cannot take pleasure, in those exhibitions of his character, and designs, which God has made in the Bible.—And this leads me to remark—

## II. THAT SINNERS DARKEN THEIR UNDERSTANDINGS THROUGH THE BLINDNESS, OR MORAL CORRUPTION OF THEIR HEARTS.

The apostle says, they are “*alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.*” We see, that blindness of heart, is something distinct from a defect in intellectual capacity. That it is not an incapacity to discern between right, and wrong; or to learn what God *is*, and *does*, and *requires*: Nor is it a want of consciousness of moral obligation: It must, therefore, be an indisposition to duty, arising from a supreme desire to indulge the sinful, and corrupt propensities of their hearts.

Sinners know, very well, that, if they turn to God, and love religion, and enter with all their hearts into God’s plans, and views, they must abandon their present course of living, and forego the pleasure, which they think to derive, from

those sinful gratifications, in which they now take supreme delight. But this, they will not do. They feel *guilty*, and *restless*, whilst they neglect God, and pursue their own chosen way ; and their sense of guilt, would wear out their lives, if they did not betake themselves, to some expedient, to render them easy, and comfortable in sin. Hence their multiplied excuses for sin. Hence their labour, to establish, and vindicate, false views of God, and his truth ; such views, as shall be least offensive to their corruptions, and throw the fewest obstacles in their way to indulgence. They know, very well, that God cannot approve of their character, and conduct, as it appears in their own eyes ; and notwithstanding this, instead of repenting, and reforming, they go about framing excuses, changing the truth of God into a lie, and charging their sins every where else, rather than upon their own perverse, and wicked heart, which is “*fully set in them to do evil.*”

Thus, influenced by their corruptions, under the control of entire selfishness, they clothe God with a character of their own conceiving, which they can contemplate without dread, and so, make themselves at ease in their sins. The Scriptures, every where, ascribe their ignorance of God to their wilful blindness. They have “*eyes, but they see not.*” They “*have both seen and hated*” both God and Christ.—The psalmist, speaking of the wicked, says, “*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*” It would be pleasing to sinners, that there should be no God, to call them to account for their conduct. And there can exist no greater evidence,

of the deep-rooted depravity of the human heart, than this, that sinners would sooner annihilate, both God, and his throne, than abandon the gratification of their corrupt, and depraved affections : But seeing they cannot become atheists, it is their life's labour, to persuade themselves into such views of God's character, as shall not, in their own apprehension, expose them to evil, on account of sin. Being altogether selfish, they desire to accommodate the character, and the government, and the laws of God, to their own views and feelings. For this purpose, they darken their own understandings, and subject their consciences, to the control of their unholy, and ungovernable appetites. And alas, my friends, what shall they do in the end, when God shall say to each individual self-deceived and self-ruined sinner, "*These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes ? Now consider this ye that*" voluntarily "*forget God, lest*" he "*tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*"

#### REMARKS.

1. We may infer, from what has been said, that all sin consists in voluntary exercise. Sinners act in all things from choice. They pursue just that course, under the circumstances of their being, which they desire to pursue.— They are not to blame, however, for having such *natural endowments*, and *capacities* as they have ; nor for that *constitution* of things, established under the orderings of providence, that unites them with that department of the great

system of divine operation, in which they are called to act. They are, in all respects, both as it regards their *powers* as moral agents, and the theatre on which they are destined to exercise them, precisely what God designed they should be; and for being such as they are, and under such circumstances as they are, they will never be condemned. Whatever guilt attaches to them, then, must lie, either in their voluntary, or necessary actings. In the latter it cannot, most obviously, lie. If from the constitution of their being, they were necessarily, and not voluntarily sinful, they could be no more to *blame* for *sin*, than for their constitutional endowments; as sin, under these circumstances, would be as much a part of their physical constitution, as understanding, or consciousness, or any faculty of the soul. To be sinners, therefore, men must necessarily be voluntary; and thence, the whole of their guilt, before God, consists in the character of their voluntary exercises. There is no state, or condition of being, conceivable, antecedent to voluntary exercise, of which we can affirm either praise, or blame, with any more propriety than we can affirm either the one, or the other, of natural beauty, or deformity. If we cannot go back of voluntary exercise, and find something antierior to it, to which we may attach a moral character, in what else, besides voluntary exercise, is it possible for holiness or sin to consist?—

2. If sinners voluntarily darken their own understandings, then they are without excuse for their guilt. Having the means of knowing their duty, and possessing the requisite capacities for performing it, their neglect of it, cannot be

otherwise than voluntary. They know their Master's will, but feel no inclination to do it. They feel the force of obligation, and often tremble under the consciousness that they deserve the manifested displeasure of their Maker. In the day when the Judge of quick and dead shall reveal himself, their consciences will be a thousand fold more sensitive than they now are, and they will be constrained to acknowledge, before the universe of God, that they are without excuse. When the mighty Arbiter of their eternal destinies shall say to them, "When I called, ye refused; when I stretched out my hand none of you regarded," their lips will be sealed in silence, and they will sink into despair, under the deep, and agonizing conviction, that their ruin is just.

Finally—Sinners are warned from our subject, not to trust in their own hearts. You are lost, my dear friends, for eternity, if you give yourselves up, altogether, to the deceitful workings of your own corrupt hearts. Labour no longer to convert into darkness, the light which heaven, in mercy, has shed upon your path. You are naturally your own worst enemies. Fly yourselves. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ with all the powers you have. "*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*"

## SERMON V.

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*"And their foolish heart was darkened."*

ROMANS i, 21.

It is very evident from the context, that the apostle intended to assert, that men were ignorant of God in the past ages of the world, voluntarily, or because they did not like to retain the knowledge of God in their minds. "*Because,*" he observes, "*that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them.*"

Doubtless much was handed down, traditionarily, about the true God, from Adam to Noah. To Noah and his immediate descendants, God gave correct ideas of his being, perfections and government. By this means was conveyed the knowledge of those elementary principles of truth, which, by a proper improvement and cultivation both of the heart and the understanding, would have brought the true God, fairly and distinctly before the minds of his creatures.— Under these facilities for improvement, they were capable, in looking at the things that were made, to discover the perfections and attributes of him who made them, even his



eternal power and Godhead. Hence they are declared without excuse for their wickedness ; and God is justified in revealing his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men—" *Because, that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*" They voluntarily forsook the very God they knew. What they knew of him was offensive to them. They were unthankful for the communications he had made to them. They took delight in holding, even those truths about God with which they were acquainted, in unrighteousness, and became vain in their imaginations. They formed such notions of God, and of his perfections, and providence, as were gratifying to their own depraved affections ; and so by indulgence, their hearts grew more and more corrupt, and they became less and less sensitive to moral obligation, until, through the power and force of their passions, or the influence of a bad, or foolish heart, the light of their understanding was exceedingly obscured, and all their natural powers were brought into the service of their lusts.

Your attention is now invited to the following proposition, as founded upon the text and its connexions.

THE HEARTS OF IMPENITENT MEN CONTROL THEIR UNDERSTANDINGS.

Before I proceed to confirm this proposition, I would offer a remark or two to define and settle my meaning.

1. I do not mean that the heart controls the understanding, where the intellect, only, is concerned, even in



impenitent men. There are many things that engage the understanding, that do not directly interest the feelings. The ordinary concerns of life, the calculations and arrangements of business, the study of the sciences and the arts, may command the whole intellectual man, and absorb his powers of thought and action. Men are acute and discerning, and grow more and more so by practice, in these things. But even here, it is not to be denied, that all men, who are not influenced by the motions of the Spirit, are actuated by a supreme regard to their own interest. It cannot be said of any, besides those who are born of God, that "*whether*" they "*eat, or drink, or whatsoever*" they "*do,*" they "*do all to the glory of God.*" The mind, however, exercises its powers without much, if any control from the passions, on those subjects, that hold no connexion, that is perceived, with the responsibilities of men as moral agents. It may, nevertheless, be true, that they cannot become so great philosophers, and artists now, as would have been possible, if they had never sinned. We cannot tell how freely, and richly, and correctly a human mind might think, that had never felt the humiliating and corroding sense of guilt. We may, however, form some estimate, of the blessedness, and healthful exercise of the mind, under such circumstances, by adverting to our own feelings, when we have been able to look with conscious approbation upon our own conduct. It must, I apprehend appear obvious, that a mind labouring under a sense of guilt, and that guilt consisting in offences done against our Maker and Benefactor, cannot exert its

energies so successfully, and powerfully, as it might have done, if it could always have looked upon its own moral actings, without the consciousness of guilt, and the blush of shame.

To the darkness, however, that lies upon the intellect, as the consequence of sin, I would not attach the term depravity. The natural powers of the mind are as they always were; but by reason of sin, and as the consequence of sinful indulgence, the *exercise* of these powers is not so healthful, vigorous, and free. Sin, in every shape and feature of it, is calculated, in its effects, to deteriorate the natural faculties of man; and the feebleness of the human mind, in its reasonings about God, and duty, is very much to be ascribed, to the moral degeneracy of our race.

2. I do mean, that the heart controls the understanding, in all those subjects that regard the moral man, and bring directly into view, his character, obligations, and destiny, as a subject of divine government. It is easy for men to believe, in those matters that hold no relation to them as accountable beings. About these, they usually reason, and determine correctly. The struggle for mastery, between their judgement and their passions, commences, when the latter love, and will pursue, what the former condemns. It is very difficult for men to continue in a course of wrong doing, without making any struggles against it, either by labouring to palliate their guilt, or endeavouring to persuade themselves, that the course they are pursuing is not wrong in their particular case. Where men are thus situated, whilst their hearts are

set on indulgence, they will, for the time being, and from time to time, their whole life long, bring their understandings, to submit to their passions. If this were not so, we could never account for men's voluntarily doing that, which both reason and conscience condemn, as wicked in the extreme.

I proceed now to establish the proposition—

I. FROM THE LANGUAGE OF THE SCRIPTURES, WITH REGARD TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE HEART, OVER THE LIVES, AND CONDUCT OF MEN.

Men who have a good heart, or what is the same thing, who love God, are in the Scriptures called wise men, men of understanding and prudence, men who fear God and love the truth, men who rightly improve their talents, who build upon a rock, who govern their own spirit, who subordinate their passions to the control of reason and conscience, enlightened, and regulated by the word of God. Men, on the other hand, who have a bad heart, are spoken of as unwise, foolish, fools, and without understanding; and as subjecting the noblest powers of their being to the control of their corruptions, they are called brutish.

The Saviour has taught us on this point, in the most clear and intelligible manner. "*A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.*" Here the heart is represented as having the whole control of the man. Our Lord intended to teach us, that men will act according to their feelings. If a man loves that which is good, he will act right; if he loves that which is evil, he

will act wrong ; and thus it is easy to judge of his feelings towards God, from his conduct. By the *good treasure of heart*, then, must be meant, his good feelings towards God and man, or in other words his benevolence. The benevolent man loves to do good : The selfish man loves to do evil.

Further, God in complaining of his backsliding people, does not say that their understandings had led them to forsake him, but that their *hearts* were far from him ; that they had set up their idols in their *hearts* ; that their *hearts* had gone out after their covetousness, and were set on their iniquities ; and that their *hearts* were hardened. 'Tis said of sinners, that they tempt God in their *heart* ; and that their *heart* is not right with him. The wicked man says in his *heart*, there is no God. Our Lord, speaking of the Jews, as abandoned to judicial blindness, observes, in quoting the passage from Isaiah which is recorded by Matthew,—“ *He hath hardened their hearts, lest they should understand with their hearts.*”

When the faculty of understanding is represented as belonging to the heart, the phrase, evidently, is not to be taken literally. 'Tis not the province of the heart to reason, compare, and judge, but, to say all in one word, to feel. The phrase “understanding heart,” where the term understanding, is used, as if it were a faculty of the heart, means nothing more, than that the heart feels the force, and gives itself up to the influence of the truth perceived, and adopted by the understanding and conscience. So when the

heart is spoken of, as being without understanding, nothing more, nor less is meant, than that it does not give itself up to the influence, and force of truth, although clearly perceived by the mind. It would be easy to multiply references on this point, as there is scarcely any subject, on which the Scriptures are more clear and full. Nor is this to be wondered at, for in speaking of the heart, they speak of the *moral feelings* of man, and therefore, of all that is good, or evil that can be affirmed of him.

'Tis clearly taught then, in the Bible, that the opinions, and conduct of men are quite uniformly in accordance, with the feelings and desires of their hearts. But we know that men have wicked desires and feelings; such as are altogether incompatible with their own, or the good of community; such as neither reason, nor conscience can approve. We know, too, that men, whenever it is possible, act agreeably to the inclinations of their wicked hearts, even under the full conviction, both of their understanding and conscience, that the course they are pursuing, is wicked in the extreme.

Our proposition is confirmed—

II. BY THE FACT, THAT THE WICKEDNESS OF MEN IS UNIFORMLY ASCRIBED TO THEIR UNHOLY AND CORRUPT AFFECTIONS.

Moral turpitude is never affirmed of the natural faculties of men. God declares their understandings darkened by reason of sin, or through the controlling influence of their wicked *hearts*. Intellectual defectibility diminishes the turpitude of crime, and the mind may be so far impaired, as to



take away all responsibility ; as in the case of the maniac or idiot. In precise proportion, therefore, as we suppose men incapable of perceiving, what is right, and what is wrong, do we lessen the degree of their responsibility, and the amount of their criminality. If we suppose men do wrong, because they are not capable of discriminating between right and wrong, we destroy the very basis of moral obligation.

Men have duties to perform, both towards God, and their fellow-creatures ; but to enable them to perform them, they must have both the capacity, and the means of ascertaining what these duties are. Under these circumstances, they render themselves criminal, either, by wilfully hating to do their duty, under the full conviction of what is right, or, in wilfully, and wickedly neglecting the means of knowledge, when within their reach, and subject to their improvement. If men are at all responsible for their actions, and are guilty in any case, their *responsibility* arises, from their having the capacity and means of knowing and doing what is right, and their *criminality*, from their being disinclined to improve them. The disinclination, however, is distinct from the capacity of ascertaining what duty is. It is the province of the understanding to ascertain what duty is ; but it remains for the heart to determine, whether the duty shall be done. Permit me to illustrate my principle, by a single example. The robber knows that he is doing wrong, when he is violently seizing the property of his neighbour ; but his intellectual perception of right, does not at all affect his

heart. He is perfectly voluntary in the course he pursues, and he pursues it, under the full conviction that it is highly criminal. What is it, that makes him, notwithstanding all this, urge his way forward to his object, even through blood? Can it be any thing, besides his wicked heart that is fully set in him to do evil?

We charge those who trespass against the laws of community, on the same principles, and in the same manner, that God charges all impenitent sinners. We call them corrupt men; men of bad habits; and we often express our regret and surprise, when we see men of fine talents, abandoning themselves to the control of the vilest passions of our nature.

But let us look at some of the revealed testimony of God on this subject. "*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*" Here the Saviour affirms that light is in the world; by which we understand, that men have both the capacity and means of knowing and doing what God requires. Now, 'tis not the condemnation, that men know their duty, and have the capacity of performing it; but because, knowing their duty, and having the capacity of performing it, they yet *hate* it, and will not exert the powers they have in the performance of it. They love darkness, rather than light. They love to submit to the control of their own wicked passions. They will not look



at the light, because they are conscious, that it will reprove them. They love darkness, knowing it to be darkness.— They know that the light is truth; and that if tried by the light of truth, they must be condemned: But notwithstanding they have a full conviction of their responsibility, and guilt, they continue in darkness, and submit to their lusts, rather than to God, and to the dictates of their own understanding and conscience.

Sinners know they are doing wrong, in the very act of sin. They are deeply conscious of every instance in which they violate the law of God. They will never be able to say, that they did not know, that they were under obligations to love their Maker, and to submit, with cheerfulness to his will. Not a sinner will ever dare to lift up his face before the Eternal, and tell him, that his criminal doing, was the result of ignorance. Not a sinner violates the Sabbath, and profanes the name of God, and abuses himself, or his friends, by base, and undignified, and unlovely conduct, and associations, who does not feel that he is guilty, who does not blush, when he remembers, that his shame may come before the publick eye, and who, if he permits himself, for a moment, to think of death, and to anticipate the judgement scene as a reality, does not tremble at the thought of appearing before his God. Yet with all this conviction of guilt, with this deep solicitude about the opinions of others, with this trembling of heart, in the prospect of the judgement to come, he still persists in debasing the noblest powers of his being, and in subjecting the immortal man, to an abject servility

to the vilest passions of his nature. Those endowments of his nature, which qualify him to expatiate with angels on the wonders of God, are forced to exert their energies, in inventing new schemes of wickedness, and new, and secret methods of gratification.

The sensualist, the voluptuary, the covetous man, the man of false honour, the careless infidel, all subject their understandings to the control of their wicked hearts, and will not give themselves up to the influence of the truth of God, nor to the contemplation of the grandeur of his attributes and of his providential movements.

Paul in addressing the Ephesians observes, "*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds; having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*" Blindness of heart, as here used, and foolish heart, as used in the text, mean a wicked heart. Now it is not to be doubted, that a wicked heart, accompanied, as it invariably is, with a wicked life; does produce a very great effect upon the natural powers of the mind. In the case of the habitual drunkard, or in the man of uniform excess in any species either of lawful, or unlawful indulgence, it cannot fail to be seen, that the *intellectual powers* become gradually impaired. Who has not witnessed many melancholy instances of the ruin of noble minds, by reason of the excessive gratification of some prevailing appetite? Dissipation of any kind has an unhappy effect, upon

the intellectual powers of man ; but when, to the effect which would naturally be produced upon the faculties of his mind, by impairing the healthful and vigorous organick action of his body, we add the effect, which a consciousness of having debased, and degraded the noblest principles of his nature, must have upon the mind itself ; the fear, and shame, and self-reproach under which it is forced every day to labour, as it is dragged into a reluctant servitude to corruption and lust, cannot fail to enfeeble its powers, and impart to it something of the debasing and guilty character of the natural heart.

Do you force your mind into a subserviency to your wicked passions ? You disqualify it for the putting forth of those vigorous and delightful energies, of which that man is capable, who acts under the influence of conscious integrity and uprightness. This was the effect produced, as the consequence of their excesses and revelries, upon the minds of those to whom the apostle refers in the text and context. Notwithstanding “ *they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened.*” Under the influence of such a heart, although they professed to be wise, they became fools, “ *and changed the glory of the incorruptible Godhead, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and to creeping things.*”

We here see what a dreadful, and overwhelming effect a wicked heart produced upon the whole man. It closed his

eyes to the perception, and discovery of his own weakness and folly, made him boast of his own shame; and whilst he was rejoicing in the richness and extent of his attainments, he was a stupid idolater, the worshipper of gods of wood and stone. "*And even,*" adds the apostle, "*as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.*" Their wicked and depraved inclinations rendered the study and knowledge of God unpleasant to them. They did not love to think on God. Their heart was set on their lusts, and thence God gave them up to a reprobate mind.

The proposition, that the hearts of impenitent men control their understanding, is confirmed—

III. BY WHAT WE SEE IN OTHERS, AND, EXPERIENCE IN OURSELVES.

We know that men often do things wilfully, and when under the influence of passion, which they seldom dare even to palliate, much less to justify. Nothing is more common than for men to confess themselves guilty, and to declare that they know when they do wrong. They have a strong conviction, and a clear understanding of right, while at the same time they continue to do wrong.

Our own experience accords with what we observe in others. We carry about with us daily a strong consciousness of guilt, for doing what we fully know and feel to be wrong. Are any in the daily habit of profane swearing? They know that it is wrong; but their foolish heart, under the influence of some one prevailing passion or other, controls

their better, and their sober judgement. They know that the practice is both unseemly and wicked. They seldom indulge in it, in their intercourse with the refined and virtuous part of community : But they are not afraid of the great God. They show less respect for him, than for their dying fellow-men. Now they do all this, because their depraved hearts control their understandings. With their understandings they are invited to seek, by all practicable and appointed means, the favour of God ; to repent of sin, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to live in obedience to all the requirements of the word of God. They know that these things are both reasonable and right, and their consciences sustain the decisions of their understanding. They know that they must die, and appear before God ; and that to enjoy him they must be changed. Yet, notwithstanding all this, they neglect their Maker, they do not repent, they do not believe, they do not pray, they commend neither their own, nor the souls of their dear offspring to the care and protection of Heaven ; nor invite others, by their example, to come to Christ for salvation. Now to what can we ascribe this course of conduct, but to their foolish heart, which is set in them to do evil.

The understanding always approves of the truth, when it is perceived ; but the heart is opposed to it, and subjects the understanding to its control. It is on this principle only, my impenitent friends, that you can account for having acted, all your life long, in direct contrariety to the dictates of your sober judgement. You never do any thing that is wicked,

nor neglect any thing that is good, because you do not see what is right, and are not sensible of the danger attending your sinful courses. It is because you love, for the present, at least, to take your own way: And you continue in the guilty character, and dangerous condition of God's enemies, not because you do not tremble at the apprehension of his wrath, nor because you think you are not to blame. No, your wicked heart deceives you along, step by step. It tells you, that your situation is peculiar, that you will only trespass this once more, that you have not a bad intention, that you will by and by repent, and do better, and that others who were as bad as you are, have reformed. Thus you practice upon your own souls, and are voluntarily forging chains for yourselves, by which you will be bound down in everlasting despair.

#### REMARKS.

1. If the hearts of sinners control their understandings, then the heart is the seat of depravity. All the difficulty in the way of the performance of duty, arises from a depraved heart; and this sinners very often acknowledge. They confess that they ought to love and serve God; and that they feel themselves to be guilty for not doing, what they know to be their duty. The heart then is *felt* to be the seat of wickedness. Creature responsibility, or moral obligation is founded on the possession of those natural powers, which qualify man to judge between right and wrong, and not on the fact, that he has either a good heart, or a bad heart. But of his natural powers it is impossible



to affirm depravity, because in the same proportion as these powers are impaired, the degree of responsibility is lessened. It is their province to exhibit truth plainly to the eye of the moral man, and we determine his character, by the feelings of his heart, and the conduct of his life, in the view of such exhibition. It is not with the heart, as it is with the natural faculties of man. In proportion as the latter are impaired, his responsibility is diminished, but the amount of his guilt is in exact proportion to the extent or degree of the depravity of his heart. Depravity consists in the supreme love of sin, or in the exercise of supremely selfish affections. Hence the more depraved the heart is, the more guilty, as an increase of depravity is nothing more than a growing hatred towards holiness, and an increasing love for sin.

2. If the understandings and consciences of sinners are on the side of truth, God has thrown serious obstructions in their way to ruin. No man can submit to the control of his passions, without disregarding the dictates of his own understanding, and treating with contempt the solemn convictions of his conscience. The man who will be God's enemy, in the madness of his heart, must also become an enemy to himself. His passions are constantly at war with the noblest principles of his nature. Resolved on their gratification, he braces himself up to the dreadful work of putting out the light of his own understanding and bribing his conscience over to the cause of sin and hell. What an awful work of ruin must the sinner accomplish upon himself,



before he can successfully force his passage to the world of wo.

3. If the hearts of sinners control their understandings, then those who think their hearts are not very bad, whilst their conduct is nevertheless very wicked, are practising a most serious and solemn deception on themselves. They are under the influence of a kind of voluntary charm; an illusion of the passions, that will have a most tragical termination. They will not become sensible to their guilt both of heart and life; but in the end, alas, they will be taught, that their joys have been fancied joys, and that the reasons by which they had attempted to justify themselves, were the creations of their own passions. The Bible, and our own experience and observation teach us, that the heart is the fountain of iniquity; but sinners often suppose their hearts to be good, although their *conduct* is bad. How great is the blinding influence of sin! How dreadfully is the foolish heart of the wicked darkened! They think the source and fountain of all iniquity to be pure, at the very time that they see nothing but impure streams flowing from it.

We often hear men excusing one another, on the ground that they are good-hearted, while at the same time they are very immoral in their lives. When the profane swearer treats with irreverence the name of his Maker, a name which all heaven adores, he is ready to excuse himself by declaring that he means no ill. The Sabbathbreaker too, will affirm with great confidence, and self-complacency, that he does not mean any disrespect for the authority of God.

'Tis true, he had rather gratify his own inclinations, than to submit to commanded duty on God's holy day ; but he persuades himself that he has no feelings of hostility towards Heaven. He does indeed treat both the Lawgiver, and his law with practical contempt ; but will not allow that he has any wicked feelings towards him in his heart. May not the midnight reveller, the dark assassin, or he, who does his crimes boldly in the light of day, say the same thing, and feel themselves free from the guilt of disrespect towards God ?

4. If the hearts of impenitent men control their understandings, then they are in bondage to their corruptions. They are rationally convinced, that they ought to love God supremely ; that it is their interest to make preparation for the coming world ; that they can enjoy, at most, all the earthly good which they now pursue, but for a short period ; and that nothing can sustain their souls in that moment, when they shall be called to give up the Ghost, but hope in the mercy of God through a crucified Saviour. When they look forward, and anticipate the day of final adjudication, when supreme love to God shall be the qualification for heaven, and the passport to glory, they are sensible of the importance of that exhortation, "*Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord.*" Yet, notwithstanding all this, they forget their Maker, disregard his authority, pass by his Son, give loose to their passions, drive after all worldly good, and neglect the high concerns of their souls. 'Tis love of wealth, or distinction ; pride of character, or influence ; a desire for unlawful pleasure, or the attainment of some imaginary

present good, that controls the feelings of their hearts, and the conduct of their lives, and leads them to adopt a loose system of morals, and to pursue a still looser practice.—What is it, besides their corruptions, that forces them on, in a course, condemned both by their reason and conscience, and a course too, which secretly, they determine one day to abandon? Their foolish heart is darkened. Through the influence of their depraved affections, although they know God, they are determined not to glorify him as God, nor to be thankful. They are in bondage to their corruptions, and thence can reap nothing but corruption.

5. If the hearts of impenitent men control their understanding, then their hearts must be changed to set their understanding free. Until this is done, they will continue in bondage to their lusts. The passions which men love to indulge in this world, and for the gratification of which, they barter the joys of heaven, and the friendship of its Sovereign, will perish at the grave's mouth. There, lust will be dumb; and pleasure, no longer wantoning in the graceful, and inviting attire of beauty and mirth, will fly the bed of death, and leave in prospect to her unhappy votaries,

“The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave;  
The deep, damp vault, the darkness, and the worm.”

Alas, what an illusion do the passions practice upon the mind! We first fix upon our objects of affection, and pursuit, and then go about convincing ourselves that we have done what was our duty. We adopt a faith in accordance with our feelings, and then justify our feelings by our faith.—

When we come to inquire into the reasons of our faith, we find the sum of them, in our desire to have it so. The minds of sinners are darkened through the influence of their corrupt hearts. They vitiate their own reasoning powers, and voluntarily shut out the light. They often take their understanding by storm, and subject it to the control of the worst passions of their nature. To be set at liberty, as it regards their intellectual powers, and to qualify the mind to take a calm, and unbiassed survey of truth, the heart must be changed; and the passions must submit to the control of reason, and conscience. If men would suffer their judgement to guide them in all matters of duty towards God, and their fellow-creatures, they would most assuredly find peace. Their only danger lies, in submitting to the dictation of an evil heart of unbelief, through the influence of which, they are constantly departing from the living God.

6. If the hearts of impenitent men control their understanding, then, if God does not change their hearts, they will perish for ever. 'Tis a vain hope that sinners indulge, that by and by they will submit to their better judgement, and control their passions, and turn to God. The heart is perverse and deceitful above all things. Having long had the control, it will require a mighty influence to subdue it. By what means, without divine aid, will the understanding, which has always been the slave of corruption, obtain the ascendancy over the passions, and command them to submission? The habit of sin is powerful, and is represented to be as difficult to overcome, as to change the physical constitution of things.—

*"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil."*

'Tis all against reason, as well as revelation to suppose, that the heart will ever be subdued, but as God interposes. Hence you see, my friends, that without God you are undone. Not because you are bound down by a fatal, and uncontrollable necessity; not because you *cannot* change the current of your passions, and bring yourselves under the control of your sober judgement, if you *would*; but because you *will not* command your hearts into submission. You love indulgence, and you love it with such strength of affection, that you dethrone your reason, and bind your conscience in chains. You close the eyes of your understanding, and madly venture near the secret place of God's wrath. By reason of thus submitting to the government of your passions, and sacrificing all that is dignifying in your natures, and all that is rich and sweet in heaven, to the gratification of your depraved and dying senses, your state is a state of imminent danger. The masters you have so long served will not give up their authority, nor submit to the least control; and if God does not graciously interpose to accomplish your deliverance, they will drive you onward with dreadful certainty, to final and endless ruin. Feel then, I beseech you, that whilst you are submitting to the dictation of your foolish heart, you are preparing for yourselves the elements of your own misery, and under a deep conviction of this solemn truth, be persuaded now to realize, that your only hope of deliverance rests in the hands of a gracious and sovereign God.







## SERMON VI.

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*“Ye must be born again.”*

JOHN iii, 7.

THE text brings into view, what is commonly termed the doctrine of regeneration; a doctrine about which there has been no small diversity of opinion in the church of Christ; and which has awakened more or less of the opposition of the human heart in every age of the world.

The method of the Spirit's operation, in producing the change implied in the text, it is beyond the province of men to determine. But how incomprehensible soever the *nature* of this change may be, so far as regards the manner in which it is effected, by the agency of the Holy Ghost, the *necessity* and importance of it cannot be questioned; and the declaration of the Saviour, “*Ye must be born again,*” ought to arrest the attention, and command the most profound consideration of sinners. Here is no room to modify, nor to accommodate. The necessity is imperious, and absolute. “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

If we hate sin, because it is odious in its nature, and opposed to God ; if we love holiness, because God loves it, and because he is holy ; if we are able to discover a perceptible change in our feelings towards the character of God, and his holy government and law ; if we love the society and employments of God's people, and take little or no sensible delight in the company and conversation of the wicked ; if we see a beauty in the character of Jesus Christ, to which we were formerly insensible, and feel a pleasure in contemplating the method of salvation exhibited in the Gospel, as adapted, peculiarly, to our condition of guilt, and ruin ; if we are pleased that God is supreme, and grace sovereign, as well as rich, and free ; if we are ready to condemn ourselves, and justify God in the revelation he has made of his will, and in the orderings of his providence, and his grace ; if we are willing to lie at the feet of gracious sovereignty, and to rely alone on the Lord our righteousness and strength for salvation ; then we have good ground to hope that we have passed from death unto life, and that the Lord Jesus "*has been formed in our hearts, the hope of glory.*"

I have thus given you a summary view, of the *effects* resulting from the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, because it is not my design, at this time, to consider this branch of the subject ; but to direct your attention, more particularly, to the NECESSITY of this great moral change.

In prosecuting my design, I would remark—

That men very generally feel, that a change in their character, and manner of living, is essentially requisite.

to qualify them for the society of heaven and for the approbation of their Judge in the state of final retribution.

Under the light of Christianity most men feel deeply, that their present character is not such as God can consistently approve. Hence they are always resolving that they will do better for time to come. They thus clearly evince, that they feel the necessity of some change or other, in the conduct of their lives, and in the temper of their hearts, and virtually acknowledge, that they are too impure in their present state to appear before God.

There is little doubt, if an angel should visit us to day, and announce, to the most self-confident, and secure sinner, in our auditory, "This day thou shalt die," that such sinner would become tremblingly alive to a sense of his guilt, and would begin, seriously, to make preparation for the immense change, by condemning his sinful motives in his past life, by approving of God's character and government, by all the external signs of deep mourning for his past follies, and by agonizing cries for mercy. 'Tis to be apprehended, that there are very few among us, who would not feel thus, in the immediate prospect of eternity. In this feeling we see acknowledged the necessity of the change brought to view in the text. We feel ourselves to be guilty, and unlike to God ; we have a deep conviction, that he is of purer eyes, than to look upon us with complacency, in our present character and views, and thence we resolve that we will do better before we die.

Nor is this feeling, in its principle, peculiar to the *Christian* world. The idolatrous portions of the human family, have

felt that they must do something to please their gods, and that they must both believe, and practice, what their deities have required ; and not unfrequently, under the deep, though deluded impression, of the necessity of the case, have made sacrifices, which indicated a zeal, and a spirit of submission, worthy of a better object, and a better cause.

The inference to be drawn from this state of facts, with respect to the common feelings of mankind, as it regards the necessity of a change of character, to render them the proper objects of the divine favour, is perfectly analogous, to what the Scriptures teach us respecting the character of the natural heart. It is a heart at enmity against God, full of rebellion, deceit, fraud, and revenge, unclean, foolish, and only evil continually.

By these representations of the unsanctified heart, we are taught, that men naturally, do not exercise those feelings towards God, and his creatures, which they ought to exercise ; and comparing as these representations do, most perfectly, with our own convictions, that an essential change must be accomplished upon us, to remove the apprehensions of dread, with which we anticipate the scenes of the judgement, and the realities of the eternal world, the conclusion seems well founded, that no man, by nature, is fitted for the society and employments of heaven ; and that his character, if his heart has never been changed by Divine Grace, is utterly offensive to God. The natural state of the sinner, being that of entire alienation from God, there is no possibility of his enjoying him, but as he experiences a change in his affections.

From the unlikeness of God, in his moral feelings, and character, to man ; and from the unlikeness of man, in *his* moral feelings, and conduct, to what God requires, and loves, we see the necessity of regeneration, or of being born again. The necessity then, of this great moral change appears—

#### I. FROM THE UNLIKENESS OF GOD TO MAN.

By this unlikeness, we do not mean a physical dissimilarity ; as that God is almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and that man, in the physical structure and organization of his soul and body, is limited and finite. This, in itself, would not lay a foundation for the necessity of regeneration. The angels are infinitely beneath God in all their endowments and attributes ; yet they need no such change, as is necessary to fallen man. They are holy, to the full extent of their capacities, and being holy, God loves them. Man, on the contrary, is totally sinful, and it is on the entire opposition of his heart to God, and holiness, that the necessity of his being born again is founded. The unlikeness of which we speak, is of a moral nature ; and has respect altogether, to the moral character of man, or to the feelings and disposition of his heart.

Influenced by the benevolent feelings of his heart, the blessed God is disposed, so to employ his attributes, as to bring about the greatest amount of good, possible to the universe. This is an infinitely amiable, and lovely disposition. Being thus disposed, he exercises his authority, and influence to promote, and secure such a state of things, as his benevolent heart ardently desires. Now it is his *love* of good, and of doing good, that constitutes the amiableness, and moral



excellency of his character. If the same good which he now produces by design, and because he delights himself in goodness, should be produced incidentally, and without any design, or feeling in God about it, we should see no reason for attaching any moral worth, or loveliness to his character. His loveliness consists in his ardently desiring the greatest happiness of being, and in his employing, in pursuance of the kind feelings of his heart, his infinite attributes to secure it. He conducts the providential, and gracious departments of his moral administration, with his infinitely wise mind fixed upon *the greatest possible good*, as the grand result of his operations. This is the end for which he made the worlds ; and to this end, the whole influence, both of the law and the gospel is directed.

Every thing that God does, as well as all that he feels is directed to the promotion of the greatest good possible to the universe : and in his powerful, and unsuspended energy of operation, to secure the desired good, he is never, for the shortest moment, turned, in the attention of his mind, nor in the desires of his heart, by such motives as influence unsanctified men, and awaken them to activity and effort. He looks only at the *good*, and with intense, and unchangeable purpose of heart to promote it, directs the immense affairs of his moral empire, accordingly. As the universal Creator and proprietor of all things, he is their rightful Governour. In the exercise of his authority, he is wise, just and good. He loves every moral virtue ; and employs the high attributes of his nature to promote the interests of order, righteousness and



truth, throughout the whole system of moral being. He exhibits HIMSELF as the standard of moral excellence ; and with infinite propriety, as the sovereign Lord of all, demands submission to his will.

The character and feelings of God, being such as we have described, he cannot but view sin in every form, and in every subject, with sentiments of utter displeasure. It is opposed to his holy nature, and his benevolent government. It seeks the ruin, both of the Creator, and his creatures, as it is hostile, in its very nature, to every thing that forms the basis of created, and uncreated good, for eternity. All its tendencies being in direct opposition to the infinitely benevolent designs of God, his soul cannot but abhor it. He can no sooner wink at sin, nor suffer it to go unpunished, than he can abandon the good of his kingdom, and deny himself, and become infinitely malevolent.

Sin, and holiness, being opposite to each other, in their nature, and tendency, so long as God is holy, and delights in good, so long he must continue to hate, and oppose the one, and love, and sustain the other. Man is opposed, in his views and feelings, to all that God *is*, and *does*, and *loves* ; nor will he ever be otherwise than opposed, until he experiences the renovating influences of the eternal Spirit of grace. The necessity of regeneration appears—

## 2. FROM THE UNLIKENESS OF MAN, TO HIS MAKER.

This unlikeness as has been observed, is wholly of a moral nature, and consists in the exercise of unholy, selfish affections. The necessity of regeneration does not lie in the fact,

in itself considered, that man is a being of limited powers. His unlikeness to God, so far as his physical constitution is concerned, was the same before the fall, that it is now. Man was created “after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.” Before the fall, he exercised holy affections ; he took delight in God, and was pleased both with his character and government. His physical constitution is unchanged ; but not so, the feelings of his heart towards the character, and government, and laws of his Sovereign.

Neither does that unlikeness to God, that renders regeneration necessary to man, consist in *that*, whatever it may be, that is necessary to make him a moral agent. He is not therefore a sinner, because he is moral agent. The holy angels are moral agents, but they are not sinners. God is a moral agent, but he nevertheless hates sin, with infinite hatred. Man is not to blame because he has those bodily, and mental endowments, that are necessary to constitute him an intelligent, accountable being. These are all good in themselves. They are such as God designed they should be, and there is nothing in their nature, on which the necessity of regeneration can be founded.

The unlikeness in man to his Maker, that renders it necessary that he should be born again, lies in the disposition of his heart, towards God, and holiness. By this disposition of heart, I do not mean any physical, or constitutional power, but the *feeling*, simply, which he exercises, and loves to indulge, in pursuing what he deems essential to his happiness. Seeking to please, not his Maker, but himself. Loving what

God hates, and hating what God loves. The whole bent, and desire of his heart is opposed to holiness, and is supremely selfish. With a heart thus opposed to the infinitely benevolent source of all good, he could not be happy, were he in heaven ; and while he has such a heart, God cannot love him.

If it is not sin, or supreme selfishness in man, that renders the change, required in the text, necessary, thus much must be granted, for thus much we *feel*, that with our temper, and character unchanged, and unimproved, we cannot expect the favour of God, nor the felicities of his future kingdom. Nor is it easy to show, what constitutes the unfitness of man, for holy communion with his Maker, either in the present, or in the state of retribution, aside from his "*carnal mind*," which, in the opinion of an apostle, consists, in "*enmity against God*." I have not supposed, that the apostle meant, to represent "*enmity against God*," as an effect, of which the carnal mind was the cause ; but that the phrase, "*enmity against God*," is employed by him, as exegetical of the phrase, "*carnal mind*." Thence he observes, "*To be carnally minded*," that is, to exercise "*enmity against God*," "*is death*." But I urge not this point, since it is evident, that, if what is done for man in regeneration, is necessary to qualify him for the society and employments of heaven, then, whatever that may be, it is very certain, that he is destitute of it before regeneration, and consequently in a state of unfitness to enjoy God. The Bible calls this unfitness, his carnal mind, his fleshly heart, his heart of enmity. Delighting in the

exercise of unfriendly, and hostile feelings towards God, in every thing, he can have no enjoyment in God, but as his feelings are changed. God is infinitely benevolent ; man is totally selfish. God exercises an unbounded, and intense regard, for the good of being, and exerts all his influence to promote it ; man, regardless both of God, and his kingdom, any farther than he may deem them necessary to his own happiness, makes *himself* the centre of his fondest desires, and his personal, and individual interest, the grand end of all his efforts.

That the whole of that unlikeness in man to his Maker, that renders regeneration necessary to him, consists in the supremely selfish *feelings* of his heart, is evident, from the fact, that this is the only particular, in which he is different, from what Adam was, in a state of innocency. Adam had no original endowments, so far as regarded the powers, either of his mind, or body, which have not always been, and are not now, common to his posterity. Man was created in the moral likeness of his Maker. This likeness consisted, summarily in his holiness, or in his supreme love to God. The fall did not deprive him of any of those powers, on which his responsibility to God, as a creature, was founded. 'Tis true, that the change in his feelings towards God, the supreme selfishness of his affections, attended, as they must have been, with a deep, and afflicting consciousness of guilt, must, in a greater, or less measure, have impaired the free and healthful, and vigorous exercise of his natural powers ; but this *effect* of sin constituted no part of his moral depravity.

This consisted, altogether, in the wrong *feelings* of his heart. In these, has ever consisted ; and in these, does still consist, the moral depravity of all his posterity.

Regeneration does not consist in the lodgement of some new power in man ; and thence, the *necessity* of it cannot be founded on the consideration that he has no such power. In their present state of guilt and ruin, God commands sinners to repent, to believe the gospel, to love him with all their hearts ; duties, which they never will perform, until they are born again, and which are uniformly, the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit. Now the command itself assumes the principle, that they have all the requisite qualifications, to comply with the duties enjoined ; and the awful threatenings denounced against disobedience, are a solemn evidence, both of their ability to do, and of their guilt in not doing, what God requires at their hands. But if the necessity of regeneration is founded on the fact, that man needs the implantation of some new power, or faculty, to render him capable of such affections as God requires, it is difficult, not to say impossible to conceive, how blame can attach to him, for not exercising those feelings, to the exercise of which, none of the present endowments of his nature are competent, and which require the addition of a capacity for action, which he never had. But the blessed God charges him with guilt of the deepest, and most aggravated character, for withholding from him the supreme affection of his heart, and threatens him, too, with his sore displeasure. Now, how these charges and threatenings can be reconciled, with the government of a being of



perfect moral rectitude, if the necessity of regeneration is founded on the fact, that the implantation of some new power, or principle, which he never had before, is requisite to man, I leave for those to show, who may have adopted these views. To me it appears, that the Saviour has assigned the true reason, of the necessity of the Spirit's influences, when he says, "*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*" Now, this "*will not,*" is nothing more, than voluntary opposition ; and so strong, and powerful is this hostile feeling, that nothing can control and change it, besides, the sweetly constraining, and all-subduing energy of the eternal Spirit.

Remember then, I entreat you, my impenitent friends, that the guilt which attends your state of unregeneracy, is your own. Nothing renders the influences of the Spirit *necessary* to you, but the fixed, and settled perverseness, and obstinacy of your own wicked hearts. So determined is your opposition, that you, "*cannot come*" to the Saviour, you cannot obtain your own consent to come, "*except the Father draw you.*" Nothing more is necessary for God to do for you, than to make you willing, and thence your voluntary opposition to him, is the only obstacle to your salvation. This, every soul that has experienced the regeneration, feels ; and this, if you are ever born into the kingdom of God's grace, you will both feel, and acknowledge, with deep humility, and lively gratitude.

Jesus has died, that you might be saved. In his groans, in his agony, and in his blood, you are taught the necessity of regeneration, and are invited to the solemn remembrance of



what he said to Nicodemus in the text, "*Ye must be born again.*" His resurrection voice to us, is, "*Ye must be born again.*" In the act of his ascension to the right hand of power, it is, as if a shout reached us from the high heaven, "*Ye must be born again.*" Before he ascended up on high, he solemnly charged it upon the ministry of reconciliation which he had instituted, to proclaim it, as a cardinal truth in the Christian system, that, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

#### REMARKS.

1. Those who think to secure heaven without regeneration, must fail of their object. Heaven is a holy place. Its employments are holy. The holiness of its inhabitants, is the foundation, and source of all their happiness. Until men are regenerated, they never have any holy affections. Every right feeling in them, is the fruit of the Spirit. Their natural heart of enmity is opposed to all that heaven is, and to all that its holy population loves. He who has the most unexceptionable character, that is possible to man in a state of unregeneracy, would be perfectly miserable in heaven. He would there make such discoveries, of the character, and government of God, as would excite the bitterest enmity of his heart, and awaken the most afflicting and agonizing consciousness of guilt and ill desert. There is not a single feeling of the natural heart that God can approve, nor is there any thing in God, that the natural heart loves. Holiness is an exotick, introduced into our fallen world, by the agency of the eternal Spirit; and without holiness no man can see God.

Those sinners will be dreadfully disappointed in the end, who expect to obtain heaven, by their fair, and honest, and upright conduct, without a reliance on the renewing, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

2. If heaven cannot be secured without regeneration, then we must be brought to approve of God's terms of mercy, or we shall lose our souls. If we would partake of the happiness which God has to bestow, which he only can bestow, and which he can bestow, only on those, who possess such a character, as it would be right in him, as a being of infinite moral rectitude, to approve, we must submit to *his terms*, and under an humbling sense of our guilt, bow down at his sovereign feet. Jesus Christ says, "*Ye must be born again.*" God says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." In being holy, he is infinitely happy. For his creatures to be unlike him, to possess an infinitely opposite character, and yet to be happy in a state of retribution, where the moral justice of God requires that all should be treated, according to their real character, is impossible. All such ideas of heavenly happiness are exceedingly gross, and unworthy of the purity, and perfection of heaven, which suppose it to consist in any enjoyments of which creatures are capable, without holiness. Would you, my friends, secure your souls salvation? Come to God's terms, repent of sin, be conformed to the image of Christ, be holy, as God is holy, and heaven is yours.

3. God cannot save sinners without regeneration. He cannot be otherwise than he is. He cannot deny himself. He cannot treat with contempt that holy law, the moral bond

of union to the universe, which Jesus came to honour ; nor destroy that righteous government, nor blight that holy character, which Jesus came, both to maintain and illustrate. But the whole scheme of redemption would be rendered a nullity, and God would act in contrariety to his own nature, should he extend pardon to a sinner, as such, and hold communion with a being utterly destitute of holiness. Let it be solemnly felt, by every guilty impenitent, that the infinite compassion of God, the good feelings of all heaven, the blood of the immaculate Jesus, are all infinitely ineffectual, to those who do not repent of sin, and love the ways of obedience, and thus give evidence, that they have been renewed, and sanctified, by the spirit of the Most High.

4. We see that sin and holiness are infinitely opposite in their nature, and are attended with infinitely different effects. God is holy ; angels are holy ; redeemed spirits are holy ; and heaven is full of happiness, and song. Men are sinners ; the lost spirits of our race are sinners ; devils are sinners ; and the earth teems with misery, and hell groans with horror. How pure is God ! How sweet is heaven ! How vile is man ! How dark and dreary, this rebellious province of our Maker ? How bitter, and how full, the cup of human woe !

In our pathway through this world, as the effects of sin, and as clear indications of its character and tendency, lie violence, and tears, and groans, and blood, and death. Even in this state of probation, upon which the Sun of Righteousness, with heavenly radiance, has shed his beams, sin revels amidst the ruins it has created ; iniquity triumphs ; virtue

languishes ; justice is subject to power, or submissive to policy ; injured innocence bleeds ; the groans of oppression are heaved to the winds ; and grief sheds her tears upon the bosom of night. Disease and death, in spectre form, plant themselves, in every step of our pathway, through life. And why has death triumphed over our common nature, and held his revels amongst the tombs of the dead ? Why has he mocked our joys ; and snatched from us our fondest hopes ; and given to the worm, and to corruption, the dearest objects of our earthly love ? 'Tis SIN that has marred this fair part of God's creation, and peopled the land of the dead with the corpses of a thousand generations, and filled the bottomless pit with the lost souls of men. Ah, my friends, where sin is, when we look to the retributions of eternity, there must be hell. But is there no way of escape, from guilt, and ruin ? Yes. Blessed be God ! Jesus "*is the way, and the truth, and the life.*" Believe on him, and though you were "*dead, yet shall you live.*" Believe on him, and you shall "*awake to the resurrection of life.*" Believe on him, and yours, to eternity, shall be the society, and the employments, and the anthems of heaven.

## SERMON VII.

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*“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”*

DEUTERONOMY, vi, 5.

IN the preceding chapter, Moses calls the attention of the tribes of Israel, to the past kind, and merciful dealings of God towards them, repeats the ten commandments, and exhorts them to a diligent and faithful observance of all the divine requirements. The text furnishes a summary, of all that the law demands, in detail. The great lawgiver of Israel, very clearly teaches them, that, although an external obedience to the law, would be a compliance, in form, with its requirements, yet, that the spirit, and essence of that obedience which the law demands, consists, altogether, in the total surrender of the heart to God.

It is a principle which is taught, the Bible over, and the correctness of it, is sanctioned, by the common consent of mankind, in their intercourse with each other, that a man is commendable, for an action which is right in form, only, in so far forth, as it is dictated by a kind and benevolent inten-



tion. If a man has it in his heart to do good, he is accepted, both of God and man. If on the other hand, he be the instrument of never so much good, without designing it, or when he had designed something else, he deserves no praise. What a man is in his *heart*, then, is his true character, in the sight of God, whatever may be the language of his *actions*.

God, in teaching us what his law requires, and in propounding the grand principle of obedience, reduces the whole to a simple, and single exercise of the heart. “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.*” God only, could authorize a law, making such a requirement, and he only, is capable of judging his creatures by it. Every one feels, that it would be presumption in an earthly parent, to make *that* the condition of his favour, to his son, of which it is the exclusive prerogative, of God only, to judge. If an earthly parent should require his son to love him with all his heart, by what means could he test the obedience of his son? It is very obvious, that he would not be able to sit in judgement on his own law. But God, whose province it is, to demand of his creatures, the entire surrendry of all their powers; and who, as the searcher of hearts, is able to discover the secret wickedness of men, and to bring their true character to light, has the *right* to demand, that we should give him our supreme affections, and the *ability* to judge, in the case. ’Tis not necessary, that men should *act out*, what they *feel*, to enable God to know, and determine, *how* they feel. He sees the internal feeling, as clearly, and as distinctly, as the external expression.



We come, then, to this conclusion, that a law, demanding the heart, can only be authorized by God ; and that he, only, is capable of judging, by this law, those, on whom it is binding.

I desire, my brethren, as we pass along, that you keep in view, these two great truths ; that God does demand of you, that you love him, with all your heart ; and that he is infinitely capable of determining, whether you have complied, or not, with what he requires.

In what I shall further say on this subject, I shall call your attention,

TO THE NATURE, AND EXTENT OF THE OBLIGATION EXHIBITED IN THE TEXT.

#### I. THE NATURE OF THE OBLIGATION.

What is it that God demands of the sinner ? The text answers, that he is required to *love* God ; that he is required to love him, with *all his powers* ; to love him *supremely*. Thence we see, the nature of the requirement, both as it regards the endowments of our being, and the extent, to which he claims them, to be devoted to his service.

Love and hatred are the ruling passions of the soul. What we hate, we avoid, and feel a strong propensity to subvert, and destroy. If I love an object, I shall labour to secure it ; and the constancy, and the extent of my efforts, will be in exact proportion, to the ardour, and strength of my affection.

Do I love my father ? Nothing gives me so much happiness, as to please him. My affection for him will render it easy for me to comply with his requirements. Indeed, it is

this alone, that can ensure my submission to his will. If he knows that my obedience flows from love to him, it cannot fail to delight his heart. If, on the other hand, I render the act of obedience, because I expect some good, or dread some evil, I exhibit no evidence that I love him ; nor can I deserve the reward of one, whose heart is devoted to his father's honour and happiness. It is not, under these circumstances, *my father*, that I love, when I render the formal obedience, but my *own personal happiness*, as I deem it connected with the anticipated good, or evil.

If I love God, I shall take pleasure in doing his will. His will, I shall esteem it my privilege, to make the rule of my life. Not *merely* nor *primarily*, nor *principally*, because I expect to derive a personal good, from obedience to what he requires. Obedience rendered from a supreme regard to my own happiness, would make God the subordinate object of my affections ; and would justify the expectation, that I should not only cease to love him, but that I should hate him also, with all my heart, the moment I should indulge the suspicion, that his existence and government were not necessary, or stood opposed to my happiness. If my love to God is genuine, and sincere, I shall as cheerfully serve him for naught, as for a reward. The motive to obedience will consist altogether, in my deep felt sense of the supreme excellency, and loveliness of God's character, and not at all, in any good I may expect from him. Love to my own happiness, is not love to God ; although I may love God, and love him supremely too, as the instrument of my happiness, as I should

love any other instrument that contributed to my enjoyment, and under the influence of this feeling, I may do *that*, so far as the *form* of my actions is concerned, which I should certainly do, from a supreme regard to the glory of God, if I loved him supremely, for the loveliness of his nature. Our Saviour has exhibited this important truth, in a very clear and interesting point of light. I present you his views without comment, and leave every man to judge for himself in the case.

*“ If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye ? for sinners, also, love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye ? for sinners, also, do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye ? for sinners, also, lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again ; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest : for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”*

It appears quite evident, when God says, “ *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,*” that he challenges our love, on the ground of the infinite amiableness and perfection of his character ; and that we can thence, only, rely with confidence on our hope, when, so far as we are able to judge, we love him, because he is lovely. Nor can we conceive it possible to determine, whether our obedience, so far as our external actions are concerned, is the result of benevolent, or selfish affections, unless we adopt the principle, that to love God acceptably, we must love him for what he is.

It will scarcely be said, that our love to God may be founded, exclusively, on the fact, that he is the mainspring and fountain of happiness to his creatures. Happiness, 'tis true, is desirable in its own nature. It is pleasing to a benevolent mind to see the amount of enjoyment there is in this world, that is merely animate. Creatures, who are endowed with reason, and consciousness, and who are capable of contemplating the character of God, and discovering the traces of his benevolence, in the multiplied blessings conferred upon animate being, may improve their own hearts, and find occasion to entertain higher and more exalted views of the extent of the divine wisdom and goodness, in looking at those enjoyments of which that part of his creation seems capable, that is without reason, without consciousness, and without responsibility. But when we speak of happiness, in relation to moral, accountable beings, we mean a happiness that is founded, on the perception and love of right ; that springs from a regard to those eternal and unalterable obligations, that grow out of the fitness and relations of things, and constitute the grand rule of duty to the moral, intelligent universe. Now to make the capacity of God for multiplying enjoyment, to any conceivable extent, without respect to the moral character of his rational creatures, the foundation of our love to him, is to overlook, and disregard the amiableness, and moral purity of his character, and the moral rectitude of his government, and to make him the infinite spectator, and supervisor of a universe full of enjoyment or pleasure, that is merely animate, without any consciousness, either of being, or felicity ; or any discovery



of God, and his glory ; or any perception of right and wrong. Such a doctrine as this, would set God wholly aside ; and by making the happiness of the creature the supreme good, without respect to moral principle, or moral character, would bring the adorable Creator into subjection, at the feet of his own creation.

We suppose then, when God says, “ *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart,*” that he means precisely what he says ; that we should make him our fear, and him our glory. He means to say, that the infinite amiableness of his character is such, that he deserves, in himself, the highest regards of his creatures ; and that they are bound to love him for what he is in himself, and because he is God.

The language of this requirement, distinctly exhibits the relation of Creator, and creature. “ *The lord thy God ;*” and it is thus powerfully implied, that we are to love God, with a filial affection, as a faithful and tender son would love, and honour his father. In his own nature, God is infinitely amiable and lovely. His excellency and loveliness, are not the less *deserving* the esteem, and admiration of his creatures, because they either will not, or cannot see him. He would be none otherwise than he is, did he exist alone. He would be “ *glorious in holiness,*” were there not an intelligent being in the universe to behold his glory. The angel Gabriel knows that God is infinitely amiable, and he loves him supremely. The prince of darkness knows it too, and yet hates him with all his powers. Neither the love of the one, nor the hatred of the other, makes God either more or less *deserving* of the

supreme homage of each, because, neither the love, nor the hatred, at all affects, the infinite purity and loveliness of those holy attributes of his being, in the possession and exhibition of which, he deserves, and challenges the supreme love of the whole intelligent creation.

God then, in demanding the love of his creatures, presents his own infinite moral excellency, as the object of their love. As his holiness constitutes the sum, and essence of his moral excellency, it is *this*, that he requires them to love, with supreme affection. In proportion as they love holiness, will they love God, and regard, to the extent of their powers, as HE does, with supreme and infinite interest, and pleasure, those eternal and unalterable principles of right, that are founded in the fitness and relations of things.

The holiness of God is essential to his glory and happiness, as an infinitely perfect Being: and a holy God, only, can make his rational creatures happy.

If this be so, every power of our nature, should be devoted to his service, and every desire, and affection of our heart, should be subordinate to his glory. Our devotedness, and submission must be supreme. It is with all our heart, and soul, and might, that we are to love him. Always, and in all things, giving the glory of God, the entire precedence, in all our objects of choice and pursuit. The strength of our affection towards him, should be such, as to enlist and control every faculty of our being. He, who has his heart supremely fixed upon his Maker, will never feel himself at liberty, can never obtain the consent of his mind, to turn away from him,



in a single object of affection. It will be, both the delight, and the labour of his life, to “*love, the Lord his God, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might.*”

We briefly contemplate—

## II. THE EXTENT OF THE OBLIGATION EXHIBITED IN THE TEXT.

When we come to ask, on whom the command in the text is binding? or to inquire after the extent of its obligation, we shall find, that it lays claim to the supreme, the undiverted and universal love, of every creature of God, who possesses the attributes of a responsible moral agent. All creatures sustain a common relation to God, as their Creator. Their powers for actions, and their capacity for enjoyment, however diversified, were given by him. His infinite moral excellency is equally deserving, of the supreme love of the highest, and lowest of his intelligent creation. Nor, as we have seen, is the rule of duty to each, difficult. Each is bound to love, with all the powers he has.

No state, nor condition of being, into which any rational creature may have voluntarily placed himself, and in which he may now be voluntary, can in the least impair, much less nullify his obligation to love God, with all his heart.

Was man, in a state of innocency, bound to love God? It was not because he was innocent, but because God was infinitely deserving of his love. The obligation which all intelligent beings are under to love God, arise, both from his own holy nature, and from the nature of those relations, that subsist between him, and his creatures. These obligation are as

unalterable, as the very nature of God. The fall of man produced no change in the character of God; nor did it affect, at all, the nature of the obligations man was under to his Maker. Adam was not less dependent on God, after the fall, than he was before. He sustained the same relation to him, as a creature, that he did before he became a sinner. He became a sinner voluntarily. It was his choice to disobey. In his voluntary disobedience consisted the whole amount of his guilt. Now, if his having become a sinner, had impaired, or nullified his obligation, then he could never have been under obligation, any further, nor any longer, than it was his pleasure, or choice to continue in obedience. Under these circumstances, it would have been left for himself to determine, how long he would remain under *obligation*, by determining how long he would remain *obedient*, or when he would choose to disobey. But it is not for man, to break with his Maker when he pleases, and to take his own course, and yet, not be held responsible.

So far as regards the *nature* of obligation, one man is as much bound to love his Maker, as another. The vilest, as well as the purest man. The outcast rebel, the fallen spirit in the world of despair, as well as the redeemed sinner, or the most exalted angel. And all this, because the obligation of moral agents, in every world, does not depend on what they may feel; or choose, with regard to the subject, but results altogether, from the glorious, holy nature of God, and from the unchangeable relations of things.

## REMARKS.

1. We learn from our subject, that those who suppose that it was one object of Christ's death, to make it consistent and possible for God to lower the demands of the divine law, in accommodation to the sinful infirmities and imperfections of creatures, are in a great error. As an infinitely perfect and holy being, God can never demand less of his creatures, than the total surrendry of all their powers to his service and fear. Were the moral requirements of the gospel, different from the moral requirements of the law, then in the one, or the other, he must have demanded, either more, or less, than is consistent with a strict regard to moral rectitude. If either were true, it would imply an affecting imperfection in the divine character and government.

The supposition, that God does not ask the love and obedience of his creatures, to the same extent under the gospel, that he did under the law, involves consequences, destructive, both of the purity, and moral rectitude of God, and of the happiness of the intelligent universe. It makes Jesus Christ, both the messenger, and the advocate of sin ; it exhibits God in the light of a changeable being, as it regards his views and feelings towards moral excellence ; it sets forth the happiness of creatures as the supreme good, instead of the glory of God ; and distributes the awards of eternity, without reference either to God, or his law. If God is infinitely perfect and unchangeable, his *feelings* towards sin and holiness must be unchangeable.

All creature obligation in the universe being founded on the nature of the divine perfections, and the relations of things, God can no sooner demand less of the sinner, than he once saw it fit and proper to demand, than he can cease to be, what he is. He now requires men to love him, with all their heart, as absolutely, and in a sense as unconditionally as ever he did ; and it is a vain hope that any indulge, with regard to their own safety, because they think it not now expected, nor required, that their love to God should be perfect, constant, and supreme. They, who on this ground flatter themselves with safety in a loose system of religion and morals, will find at last, that they have not derived their notions of obligation from the Bible, and that all their hopes have been vain.

2. From what has been said, we learn that every sinner is without excuse before his Maker. He is required to "*love the Lord his God with all his heart,*" but he will not love him at all. His *disinclination*, although a barrier insuperable by every thing else, besides the efficient energy of the Holy Spirit, is his *sin*. It is not necessary that he should have an inclination to love God, to render him a sinner for not loving him. To suppose this, would be absurd. He has all the powers that are requisite for the performance of every duty. It is on the possession of these powers that his responsibility is founded. Let his heart be inclined to God, as it is to his pleasures, or to any pursuit, in which he delights, and there will be no more difficulty in the way of his doing his duty. But is he *therefore* excused for not loving God, because he

does not *choose* to love him ? Men find no difficulty in loving what pleases them ; and they are never afraid to *show*, that they love what pleases them. They do not love God, because God does not please them.

Do they excuse themselves from duty, because their hearts are not right ? Then they make sin, its own excuse. There is no sin, but in having a wrong heart, or what is the same thing, in having wrong affections ; nor is there any holiness, so far as it is possible for creatures to determine, but in having a right heart, or, in having right affections. If men do not love God then, it is only, and exclusively because they will not, and thence they are without excuse.

3. If what has been said be true, then we see, that men are as active in the great work of regeneration, so far as they are under any obligations to exert an agency in this work, as they are at any other time, or under any other circumstances. They are as active in the exercise of holy, as in the exercise of sinful affections. So far as they are under *obligations* to be in a regenerated state, and to exercise the affections peculiar to it, and so far as they are *guilty* for not being in that state, and for not exercising the affections peculiar to it, so far they *must be capable* of complying with the obligations they are under, and consequently must be *active* in their compliance. Whatever passivity man may lie under in the great work of regeneration, has not the most distant possible connexion with his responsibility as a moral agent ; and it must, thence, appear obvious to every reflecting mind, that so far as he is passive, no blame can attach to him. Men are bound “ to



*love the Lord their God, with all their hearts :*" But "*whose loveth, is born of God.*" Thence men are bound to be in that state, and to exercise those feelings, that imply regeneration. They are not bound to do *that*, in this great work, which God has reserved to himself, as his exclusive prerogative to do for them. It is his province to "*work in them, both to will and to do.*" It is their province and duty, to *will and do*. Thus God commands "*Make you a new heart and a new spirit.*" He does not require them to make a new power, or a new faculty. He does not require them to do the peculiar and appropriate office work of the Holy Spirit. What then does he require ? Can it be any thing else, than the duty which he most solemnly enjoins in the text ? "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.*" To this his endowments are entirely competent. This he only can do. No being in the universe can do it for him. But *in this*, to render him a hopeful subject of the divine complacency, and of reward, he must be entirely voluntary and active.



## SERMON VIII.

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*“Hear, ye deaf ; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.”*

ISAIAH xlii, 18.

IT is very clearly implied in these words, whether we consider them addressed to Jews, or Gentiles, or both, that those who *were* addressed, both had ears to hear, and eyes to see. They were voluntarily deaf, and blind ; and when called on to hear, and to look, that they might see, it is a call to give up their obstinacy, and to cease from their wilful rebellion. Although the passage may have been designed to exhibit the insensibility and blindness of the Jews ; and perhaps prophetically alluded, to their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ ; yet, as illustrative of the disposition, and character of the natural heart, it is applicable to sinners of every description. The text may therefore be viewed, as addressed authoritatively, to all sinners. *“Hear, ye deaf ; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.”*

We contemplate

THE CONDITION AND THE DUTY OF SINNERS AS EXHIBITED  
IN THE TEXT.

THEIR CONDITION—THEY ARE DEAF AND BLIND.

THEIR DUTY—TO HEAR AND LOOK, THAT THEY MAY SEE.

Let us look—

# I. AT THEIR CONDITION.

Mankind in their natural state, are represented to be both deaf, and blind, and it is a matter of no small moment to determine, in what sense they are so. It is most palpable that a defect as it regards the organs of hearing and vision, cannot be intended. We thence conclude, that the language of the text is figurative. It refers necessarily, either to a natural, or moral disability. By natural disability, we understand, that they are born into the world, the subjects of a physical depravity, the influence of which, it is out of their power, even if they were willing, to resist. By a moral disability, we would be understood, uniformly to mean, a disinclination, or unwillingness to do, what they feel conscious they have the capacity to do. When sinners, therefore, are called on, as the deaf, to hear, and the blind, to see, we are to suppose, either, that they have not the power of perceiving truth, nor of feeling the force of obligation, or, that they are not inclined to embrace the truth when perceived, nor to submit to their own consciousness of obligation. If the former be true, it is difficult to perceive, how they can be sinners, as it would be preposterous to attempt to show, that man cannot feel guilty for not exercising, and improving faculties, and talents, which he never had. A consciousness of *guilt*, must invariably be attended, with a corresponding consciousness of *ability*. A physical disability, is as much beyond the power of man to

remove, if he were never so much inclined, as to make a world, by the unassisted energy of his own arm. Were he commanded to make a world, he could feel no obligation, and feeling no obligation, could experience no consciousness of guilt. But not to insist on this point, I remark—

1. That, whatever the disability of the sinner, implied in the terms of the text may be, it is not of such a nature, that, in the judgement of his Maker, it has been thought inconsistent to call on him, both to hear, and to see. Let the sinner's condition, and circumstances of depravity be what they may; come to him his present fallen, guilty, and miserable state, through what channel soever, you may please to suppose; call his sin, infirmity, and his disability physical; deny that there is any difference, in the great, and solemn relation man sustains to his Maker, between what he cannot do, and what he will not do; and what then? are we not still groaning under the deep-seated consciousness of guilt? and anticipating, with dreadful apprehensions, the scene of the judgement, and the day of wrath that is approaching?

It is of use to affirm on this subject, because we may thus become deeply convinced of our guilt and ruin, and be led to lie down, in humble submission, at the feet of Jehovah; but it can serve us no purpose to deny, and project, one, and another plea, to get rid of our consciousness of ill desert; and to quiet our minds, whilst we neglect God; for whatever we may either affirm, or deny, the solemn fact lies on every hand of us, that God views us as sinners; treats with us as sinners; and comes down upon us, with the tremendous threat-

enings of his wrath, to awaken us to a sense, both of our interest, and duty ; and to bring us to a timely repentance.

Whatever men may believe on this subject, will not alter the truth of that solemn, and awful affirmation of Job, “ Is not destruction to the wicked ? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity ? ” Whether God can consistently punish sinners or not, under their present views of the nature of sin, and of obligation, must be settled between them, and their Maker on another day. That God will punish the impenitently wicked, he has himself declared ; and God forbid, that I should doubt for a moment, that he will do otherwise than infinitely right, in punishing them.

Now let sinners remember, that whatever views they may indulge, in the legitimate consequences of which, God may be charged with injustice and cruelty, in what he demands of them, and in the treatment he will extend towards them, they are directly at issue, with their Maker ; and let them see to it, that they have their cause well prepared, against the day when God shall rise up. God threatens to punish them if they continue impenitent. They say he cannot consistently punish them, since without their consent, they were born into the world in a miserable and wretched condition. Let them prepare themselves then, with arguments, to meet the Judge, in the last day, on the point at issue between them—

We remark—

2. That the disability of sinners, implied in their being deaf, and blind, is not such, as to take away their consciousness of guilt. When they *feel* that they are guilty, they *are* guilty,

Their feelings are awake to that which is *real*. GUILT is predicable, only, of a *capacity* in an agent, to choose, or refuse ; and a consciousness of *guilt*, can only be *felt*, when there is a coexisting consciousness of such *capacity*. Their continued consciousness of guilt, therefore, is an evidence, that their being deaf, and blind, does not make them blameless ; nay, that even their very *disability* is their *sin*. Of this, their feeling of blameworthiness is a solemn and decisive evidence.

When therefore, in their speculations on this subject, they would justify themselves, on the ground of native depravity, they are at issue with their own consciences, and what an affecting embarrassment will this witness within them, lay them under, when they shall be called on to appear before God in the judgement ?

Thence I would observe—

3. That their disability is not such, as shall stay the hand of justice from falling on them ; nor such as shall shield them from the wrath divine. God invites them, entreats them, warns them, threatens them. And all, on the ground, that they are inexcusable for not hearing, and seeing, when he requires that they should both hear and see. It would be as inconsistent in God to *threaten* them *now*, as to *execute* his threatenings upon them *hereafter*, if they were not really guilty. Whatever their disability may be, therefore, it is not such as will shield them from the wrath and curse of God. No state, nor condition of feeling, possible to them, will be effectual to this end, besides their voluntary, and hearty accep-



tance of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour of sinners.

We remark—

4. That their disability is not of such a nature, that God did not see it, both consistent, and necessary, to provide a method of pardon, through the sacrifice of atonement. But, if the disability of sinners had been such, as to take away their guilt, then, where the necessity, of the tragical events connected with the scheme of redemption?

If man had laboured under a physical depravity only, it is not at all difficult to see, that God might have removed it, by the application of his power; as no moral principle would have been involved, in such an act. But the fact that Jesus died, to render it possible for God to save sinners, is evidence, that there was something in the way of their salvation, which to his infinite mind, it was *inconsistent* for him to remove, by an application of his power. This, we are told the Bible over, is man's *guilt*, or *sinfulness*. "*He died the just, for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*" "*It is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*" "*There is salvation in none other.*" "*There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved.*" And even now, that Christ has died, "*He,*" only, "*that believeth shall be saved,*" whilst, "*he that believeth not, shall be damned.*"

We remark—

5. That the deafness, and blindness of the sinner is voluntary. He is deaf, because he will not hear. He is blind, because he will not see. When God calls upon the deaf, and



the blind sinner, to hear, and to see, it is clearly implied, that he can see, and hear ; and that he is voluntarily deaf and blind.

Let the sinner be told, that his depravity is of such a character, that he cannot help himself even if he would, and he will reply, then am I not to blame, and his reply would be just. But in laying this conclusion, by the side of what God commands and threatens, he would feel himself in trouble. If I cannot help myself, he will be ready to say ; if I am labouring under a disability, which binds me, even against my will, how can God be just, in punishing me for what I cannot help ? and for that state and condition, which I was in no measure tributary, in bringing about ?

Now here, the sinner would content himself, and let the charge lie upon his Maker, and feel no disquietude about it, if it were not that his hatred towards the truth, renders it sometimes necessary, that he should take opposite ground. When he thinks on God as a sovereign, working all things according to the counsel of his own will, and disposing of sinners for his own glory, raising up one, and putting down another, his heart rises into opposition, and he comes out to disprove the doctrine of Sovereign decree, and Sovereign election, by declaring that they are inconsistent with free agency. Under this aspect of things, he now becomes as strenuous an advocate for the doctrine of free agency, as before he was contented, and pleased, with the system that made him a mere machine. Tell him that he can help himself ; that he is voluntary in sin ; and that he is to blame for not loving

God with all his heart ; and he replies, I am just what God made me, I cannot help myself ; and he is prepared to reason himself into the belief, that he is a machine. Tell him that he is totally dependent on God ; that God will employ him as an instrument in promoting the glory of his holy name, whether he be saved, or perish ; that God made him to answer his own wise and benevolent purposes ; and he either denies these truths, or charges his Maker with injustice, and cruelty.

The question then, with regard to his being voluntary in sin, seems to be thus settled by the sinner. He is both voluntary, and involuntary, whichever, for the time being, may best subserve, the steady purpose of his soul, to cast all blame from off himself ; indifferent as to where it may rest, whether on his fellow creatures, or on God his Maker.

Now all that we have said, my friends, has not been merely for the purpose of proving *that*, to you, of which ye were conscious before, that you are voluntary in sin, and thence to blame ; but from an anxious desire, that by holding up the truth to your view, and calling up to your recollection, your own consciousness of guilt, your convictions, by the blessing of God, might become so deep, and pungent, that you would feel yourselves impelled to sue for peace, by throwing yourselves, in humble submission, at the feet of your justly offended Sovereign. He declares that you “ *have ears to hear, but hear not.* ” “ *Eyes to see, but see not.* ” “ *Hearts to perceive, but that you do not understand.* ” You are surrounded with light, and blessed with privileges. You have the means of knowing, and the capacity of loving, serving, and enjoying

God. But he declares to you, that you will improve neither. He knows, that you are both deaf, and blind ; and he knows too, that you are so from choice, and because you love to be so. None so deaf, nor so blind, as those who *will* not hear, nor see. And this God affirms to be your case. You do not do wrong, ignorantly ; nor because you do not know, what is right. You neither neglect a duty, nor are guilty of a direct violation of God's law, without being conscious of guilt. You do not refrain from prayer, nor violate the Sabbath, nor profane the name of God, nor do any other iniquity, because you are ignorant of the high criminality of such conduct. God charges you with all this ; your consciences too, charge you. And how, my dear friends, shall ye escape in the day of wrath ? Comply with the duty enjoined in the text, and you are safe. " HEAR YE DEAF, AND LOOK YE BLIND, THAT YE MAY SEE." Let us contemplate therefore, for a moment—

## II. THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO ARE ADDRESSED IN THE TEXT.

The duty to which sinners are exhorted, is not only, a diligent, and faithful use, and improvement, of the means of instruction and knowledge, which God has appointed, but also, a sincere love, towards the great, and interesting truths, which God has revealed. When sinners are exhorted to hear, and to look, that they may see, it is the same, as if they were exhorted to believe, to have full confidence, to obey, or to say all in one word, to love. God demands of them, the consecration of the powers and faculties he has given them, to his honour and glory. He does not demand of them, the exer-

cise of powers which he never gave them. The language of the text, irresistably implies, that they have those faculties of hearing, and of vision, on which their obligation to hear, and see is founded ; and it is on this principle alone, that the injunction of the text, can be conceived consistent, with the moral rectitude of God. If they were required to consecrate to their Maker, powers which they never had, it would be the same thing, as to require them literally to create something in themselves, that shall become a constituent principle of their being, which did not belong, either to their physical, or moral constitution before. And how, if this were the case, they could be commanded to make a new heart, and a new spirit, would be difficult, not to say, impossible, to conceive ?

When sinners are commanded to love God with all their hearts, we understand that they are bound to love him, with all the power of loving which they have ; or in other words, to be wholly devoted to God. In one word, the duty enjoined upon the sinners in the text, is a total abandonment of his opposition to God, and a voluntary, and cheerful submission to his will in all things.

#### REMARKS.

1. The excuses which sinners make, to justify their neglect of duty, and their continuance in sin, will avail them nothing in the great day of God. The position which they take, can be supported, only, at the sacrifice of the moral rectitude of the King of Heaven. They declare themselves not to blame. God declares that they are. They declare, that they cannot,

by reason of the depravity, and infirmity entailed upon them through Adam, love God and obey him, as he has required. He declares, by the very requirement itself, as well as directly, and by implication, in a thousand other ways, that they can. Surely, they ought to be fully satisfied, that their views are wrong, since they are in direct contrariety, to what God has said, respecting their character, and to what, if they continue impenitent, he has revealed, respecting their destiny.

What avails it to say, it cannot be, that God will condemn me for what I do, since I was brought into the world under a constitution of his own appointment, by reason of which it was as certain that I should sin, as that I should exist, when at the same time, God, with all these things full in his eye, and understanding them infinitely better, in their nature, relations, and bearings, than is possible for creatures, holds men responsible ; charges sin home upon me—makes me feel the guilt of it ; and threatens me with his infinite displeasure, if I do not repent ? Why, my friends, should we attempt to set aside the instruction to be derived, from the solemn and affecting facts, that meet us on every hand, in relation to this subject ? We know that we are sinners. We know that God declares us to be sinners, and that he threatens us with his displeasure for being sinners. We cannot fail to perceive, that the principle which we assume, as the ground of our justification, so implicates the divine character, that if it were true, heaven would not be desirable, nor hell dreadful. Your only chance of escape, therefore, dying sinner, lies in



the ruin of that glorious Being, whom saints and angels admire, and the wisdom, and purity, and benevolence of whose character, and reign, form the basis of their infinite, and eternal expectations. Judge ye then, whether you, or your Maker shall fall.

2. Sinners will feel, both the desert of blame, and of punishment, when they shall come into the eternal world. They indulge the delusive hope that they shall not have so strong and decided, a consciousness of guilt, then, as they have now. Nay, they hope, that God will then take off from them, what they are ready to suppose, he has unjustly imposed on them, in this world. As they indulge a kind of undefinable expectation, that they shall *do*, and *be*, better themselves, when they shall have entered on the eternal world, although they make no resolutions about repentance and amendment ; they seem to think, that God also will change in his feelings towards them. They look for the same kind of change, in the feelings of God which they think, they shall themselves experience, in their own feelings. But in both particulars, they will find themselves exceedingly disappointed. Their conviction of desert of blame, and of punishment, must follow them into *eternity*, if they come not to repentance in *time*. If their own hearts condemn them *now*, “*God is greater than their hearts, and knoweth all things.*” Even those, who shall have been redeemed to God, by the blood of his Son, will feel, whilst they shall be employed in the song of heaven, that in themselves, they deserve nothing but wrath. But this feeling, in the redeemed, is mingled with



a delightful and transporting sense of pardon, a heavenly persuasion, that God looks upon them, through Jesus Christ, with infinite complacency. In the finally impenitent, however, there will be nothing but a deep sense of guilt, for their hatred and opposition, to the glorious, holy God.

All the feelings of anxiety, and dread, about the future, that now attend impenitent men, will follow them into the eternal world. And what can fill the mind of a sinner with deeper shame and horror of himself, than the full conviction, that he hates, with all his heart, *that* God, who is the most lovely, and amiable being in the universe ? Let sinners remember, that conscience will have a keen, and quick sensibility, in eternity, of which they little think, now. Their corruptions will then have let go their hold upon it ; and the agony which it will excite, will be felt, in every pulse that shall vibrate upon their heart-strings for ever.

3. We may learn from our subject, that all sin consists in the voluntary exercise of the sinning agent. The sinner is voluntarily deaf, and blind. He is under no natural impossibility of hearing, and seeing. Were there a natural impossibility, it would take away *blame*, by taking away the *ground of obligation*. But neither holiness, nor sin, consists, in the mere *capacity* sinners have, of exercising either right, or wrong feelings, but in the voluntary *exercise* of right, or wrong feelings ; or in other words, the praise or blameworthiness of an agent, consists not in the fact, that he is *capable* of feeling, but in the *feeling itself*.

To hear, and to see, in the sense required in the text, we have seen, is voluntarily to recognize the authority of God, and to submit to him. Hence, we can only affirm praise, or blame, of the *moral* doings of men. They are neither to be praised, nor blamed, for having the *capacity* of moral doing. The moral characters of men are said to be good or bad, from what they do ; and it is their being voluntary in what they do, that makes their characters good or bad. Guilt consists in *choosing* sin, not in the *power* of choosing it. Adam, in *innocency*, had the power of choosing sin, but he was not guilty, until he actually chose sin. His guilt consisted in his *choosing that*, which God had forbidden. All sin, then, consists in a wrong, or wicked choice.

4. Our subject corrects an error, into which some have fallen, on the great doctrine of regeneration. Sinners are called on, to see, and hear, with the eyes, and ears, they have. They are not commanded to make them, eyes, and ears, that they may see, and hear. Thence we learn, what we are to understand by the requisition of God through the prophet—" *Make you a new heart.*" Not create a new principle of action, a new taste. Not alter the physical constitution. God has made this, just as he would have it. Man is now, all that it is necessary he should be, to render it proper, or consistent, to affirm praise, or blame of him. Sinners can do right, if they please, without a physical change. A *moral* change is necessary ; but a moral change is nothing more, than a change of will, purpose, or inclination ; and it is this change, that God, by the mouth of the prophet, commands the sinner

to operate for himself, when he says, "*Make you a new heart and a new spirit.*" "*Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double minded.*"

5. We see, that sinners are entirely to blame for not being, altogether, what God requires them to be. Are you now a sinner, without God, and without hope in the world? It is your own fault, that you are not a saint. Are you exposed to perish in your sins? It is your own fault, that you have not the high and rich hope of heaven. In what a naked and defenceless condition, will impenitent sinners stand before God in the judgement! What will they do, when God rises up? and when he visits, what will they answer?



## SERMON IX.\*

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*“ And there they preached the gospel.”*

ACTS, xiv, 7.

PAUL and Barnabas having laboured for some time in Iconium, were at length, under the hand of persecution, obliged to depart, and they came to Lystra, and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, “ *And there they preached the gospel.*”

The term gospel, in its simplest import, is good news, or glad tidings. The gospel of the grace of God, is the good news of the grace of God, or the good news, that God has exhibited, a system of mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by which sinners may be saved. All that God has done, towards effecting and securing the salvation of sinners, through Christ, being the result, purely, and exclusively, of gracious sovereignty ; and it being, in itself, and in its consequences and connexions, a subject of interest and joy, to the holy, benevolent universe, as well as to man, that a method of deliverance from endless wrath, is opened to all who will submit to the terms proposed, the gospel is thence called, the gospel of

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\* Preached at the Installation of the Rev. Mr. Eddy, Canandaigua.

the grace of God ; or the announcement of the glad intelligence, that, whosoever shall repent of sin, and believe on the name of Jesus, shall be saved. “ *Behold,*” said the angel to the shepherds, “ *I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*” THE EXHIBITION OF CHRIST, AS A SAVIOUR, in connexion with those truths, that are founded on the relations that run through the whole system of moral agency, is to publish the good tidings of great joy, or to preach the gospel.

It shall be my object, at this time, to point out, in a few particulars—

#### WHAT IT IS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

We have already remarked, that *the exhibition of Christ as a Saviour*, in connexion with those truths, that arise out of the moral relations of the intelligent universe, is to preach the gospel ; and that the gospel is good news, because, in perfect accordance with these relations, it proffers pardon to our guilty race, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Aside from what we are taught, both by revelation and experience, we see, in the very nature of the system of pardon, certain important facts, with regard to the character and condition of man, presupposed. Why offer pardon to man, if he is not condemned ? Why is he condemned, if not guilty ? The guilt and ruin of man, therefore, are presupposed, by the system of pardon propounded in the gospel. Hence no man can preach the gospel to the acceptance of God, and in such a manner, that it may become the instrument of salvation to his



hearers, who does not in his heart believe, and in his daily ministrations endeavour to illustrate, and enforce these two great truths—The total depravity of man—And his just desert of wrath.

Now suppose Christ be revealed as the object of faith, and the revelation be accompanied with the declaration, that unless men believe on his name they cannot be saved. What effect would this have, on the mind that does not see, and the heart that does not feel, the guilt and ruin of sin. Produce on the mind of the sick man, a conviction that he is diseased, let him see the danger of his situation, and he will apply for relief. If he has not this conviction, if he is insensible to his danger, the application for relief will not be made, although the remedy be at hand. 'Tis doubtless, under some such view as this, that the prophet asks, "*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there not a physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*" The answer is obvious. She felt no disease; and hence saw no necessity for applying the healing balm, or seeking the aid of the physician.

No man, therefore, can preach the gospel, so as to give meaning and efficacy to the system of pardon which it develops, without making such an exhibition of its truths, as is calculated to produce the conviction on the minds of sinners, that without Christ they must perish.

We proceed, therefore, to remark—

I. That the proclamation of pardon, through the Lord Jesus Christ, implies that men are sinners. What is thus implied, it is essential that men should feel, to enable them to

form just apprehensions, of the gospel method of forgiveness ; to excite in them right affections towards their Maker ; and to qualify them, in any just measure, to appreciate the infinite condescensions of the Saviour, and the riches of his grace.

A consciousness of my native, and deep rooted enmity against God, must, in the very nature of the case, and in the order of revealed truth, precede my acceptance of Christ. I shall see no reason for accepting his proffered friendship, as the great physician of souls, if I do not feel that I am labouring under a spiritual malady. If I am made sensible that I am morally diseased, and that Christ alone can impart to me the healing balm, I shall have a powerful motive, impelling me to apply to him ; and if healed, shall be capable of appreciating the skill, and kindness of my heavenly physician.

In preaching the gospel then, 'tis necessary, first of all, to exhibit to man his moral depravity ; his total alienation of heart from God. This he must feel, or the announcement of the Saviour, will not be the publishing of glad tidings to him. Christ may be exhibited, with never so much tenderness, and urged upon sinners, with never so much warmth, they will remain listless and indifferent, until they are brought to such a deep sense of their sinfulness, that they are ready to take the side of God, and acknowledge their desert of eternal wrath. It should be a grand point of labour, with the servants of Christ, to present, to the mind of the sinner, such clear evidence of his guilt, as is calculated to awaken conviction, and to make him feel, that he stands, without excuse, naked and defenceless, before his Maker. If there is any one point, that is of pri-

mary importance, in preaching the gospel, it is clearly to exhibit to the sinner, his character of guilt, and his desert of wrath. "*Show my people their transgressions,*" is the command of God. *By showing* them their transgressions, is intended, doubtless, making them sensible, so far as means can effect it, of their guilt, by exhibiting to them their true character and conduct. This implies, that the sinner's guilt, or desert of wrath, may be so placed before him, that if he does not see it, and feel it, the blame of his final ruin will lie upon his own head ; and the righteousness of God, in his condemnation, will be vindicated in the view of a holy universe. It is a consciousness of his guilt, or ill desert, alone, that can inspire the sinner with ingenuous emotions of regret, and godly sorrow on account of sin ; and lead him to look to the VICTIM of Calvary, as the only being that can ease the burden of his soul.

2. In preaching the gospel, it is necessary to exhibit to the sinner, his state of condemnation. That he is not only guilty, deserving of wrath, but also, as being the enemy of God, that he is condemned already. Here the nature of God's character, as lawgiver and judge, should be exhibited ; the moral precepts, by which he has commanded his creatures, to regulate the conduct of their lives, and to control the affections of their hearts, should also be urged ; and every argument should be employed, that can be drawn from the nature of the subject, and its solemn relations, both to time, and eternity, to awaken in sinners, a sense of their condition, as condemned creatures, and to make them feel that their condemnation is just.

3. To preach the gospel, is to warn the sinner, that he will finally, and utterly perish, if he does not accept of that method of pardon, which the gospel reveals.

The benefits which are proffered to sinners, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ ; and which are to be secured, only, by exercising faith on his name, are evidence of our lost and hopeless condition, whilst out of Christ ; and it is as certain, that we shall eventually perish, as it is that we are sinners, and in a state of condemnation, the death of Christ to the contrary notwithstanding, if we do not repent of sin, and love and practice holiness, and approve, with all our heart, of the law, and character, and government of God, and the method of salvation by his dear Son.

If it is true, that the law of God has not let go its hold on the sinner, on account of the bloodshedding of Christ, then, unless the eternal Spirit purifies the sinner's heart, the penalty of the law will be put into execution ; the threatened curse will be inflicted. But if Christ came to support the authority, and vindicate the righteousness, both of the law, and the Lawgiver, then he shed his blood, that the moral rectitude of God in the pardon of sin, might be made distinctly manifest to the moral universe ; and then too, the sinner is so far from ceasing to be under obligation to law, and under liability to its curse, by the mere fact that Christ has died, that he is doubly guilty, so long as he continues to reject offered mercy, seeing that by this act, he is directly opposed to that benevolent and righteous government, and authority, which it was the special object of the Saviour's

death, to maintain, and exhibit. When the apostle says that Christ is "*The end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth,*" it is clearly affirmed, on the one hand, that the death of Christ will avail those nothing, who do not believe, and it is as distinctly implied, on the other, that the law comes down upon them still, with all the authority of its claims, and all the solemnity of its sanctions. The ruin of unbelievers is as certain, therefore, as if the voice of mercy had never reached our fallen world. They are in a state of condemnation still, and if they do not repent and believe, they must perish finally, and utterly, in sight of the very cross of the Redeemer.

In preaching the gospel, it is obvious, that such views as these should be plainly, and forcibly exhibited, that men may not venture their everlasting all, upon a fallacious foundation; but by becoming acquainted with the terms of mercy, and realizing their true situation, may "*fly for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them.*" Hence—

4. To preach the gospel is to exhibit in a clear, and definite manner, the great doctrine of atonement. The apostle Paul, when speaking of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, observes, "*Whom God hath set forth, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past. To declare, I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*"

It is here clearly implied, that God could not pardon sin, unless something was done, as authorized by him, by which



it should be declared, or made manifest, both that he hates sin, and that it deserves to be punished. The perfections of his nature, the rectitude of his government, and the purity of his law, required that he should make such a declaration of the desert of sin, and of his feelings towards it. It was to deliver his holy character, and administration, from any, and every ground of imputation of blame, and inconsistency, that the atonement was necessary. The guilty character, and the lost, and ruined condition of the human family, furnished the *occasion* for this wonderful display of divine wisdom and mercy; but the *necessity* of it, lay altogether, in the nature of the Divine character, and government.

It would not have been an act of injustice towards mankind, if God had pardoned them without an atonement; but it would have been an act of injustice towards himself; it would have been an expression of contempt towards his own authority; and a declaration of direct hostility, to those eternal principles of moral rectitude, which he had promulgated with the most solemn authority, and enforced with the most awful sanctions.

Let us ask for a moment, what was it, that lay as an obstacle in the way of God's pardoning the sinner, without an atonement? Was it any thing besides his own *feeling* of the infinite unfitness, and injustice of such a procedure, when viewed in connexion with the relations, interests, duty, and happiness of the moral universe? God is the great arbiter of right. His holy creation look to him for protection, and blessedness. On the unchangeableness, and uniformity of his character and



government, are founded their everlasting hopes. Whilst God's own tender regard for the good of the universe, forbids that he should do any thing that should implicate his character, it at the same time, requires, that he should manifest his decided approbation towards whatsoever things are pure and lovely ; and that his holy throne should be exalted high in the view of the intelligent creation, as the everlasting habitation of justice, and of judgement.

We may clearly infer, that it would have been unjust in God, and inconsistent with his government, as a being of perfect moral rectitude, to have pardoned sin, without an atonement. Now to open a way, for indulging the kind and merciful feelings of his heart, in pardoning sin, and yet for making the most full and perfect declaration of his hatred towards sin, and of his love for holiness, righteousness and truth, his wisdom fixes upon the wonderful plan of atonement. In the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, all that God desired to *do*, and to *express*, is fully accomplished ; and now he can "*be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*"

Now, if it was to exhibit, to set forth, or to declare, the moral rectitude of God, in the pardon of sin, that the atonement was necessary, then it is easy to see, this great end being secured by the atonement, that the offer of pardon may consistently be made to every offender of the human family ; and that the sincerity of God in extending the invitations of the gospel, to those, who, he knows will reject them, is most abundantly vindicated. Whilst, therefore, it is plain, on the one hand, that the atonement removes every obstacle, on

God's part, to the salvation of sinners, it is equally evident, on the other, as it was necessary, only, on God's account, to maintain the rectitude of his character as moral governour, that it does not, *of itself*, secure the *salvation* of any man. It is a divine expedient, by which, God can consistently save, all that will come to him through Jesus Christ.

We learn, not only, from the passage to the Romans, noticed above, but also, from various other portions of the Bible, that the benefits of the atonement are sure only to him "*that believeth in Jesus.*" But if the *benefits* of the atonement, can *then only* be enjoyed by creatures, as they *believe*, it is very evident, that it enters into no part of its *nature*, to secure the salvation of a single individual, and much less then, can it have had for its exclusive end, a select and particular number. Its efficacy, in rendering the salvation of any of the human family secure, lies, in the sovereign, and glorious purpose, and will of God. And this is evident from what our Lord says, "*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, cause thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.*" It is then the electing sovereignty of God, by which the benefits of the atonement are rendered effectual to salvation in any case : But for this all powerful, and gracious interposition, the death of Christ notwithstanding, not one of the human family would ever have been saved ; and the way to the throne of God, and the joys of eternity, would have remained untrodden by the foot of a single son or daughter of Adam.

Christ has died—He is offered to all men.—All refuse to embrace him. God interposes, by his gracious electing sovereignty, and delivers all whom it is his good pleasure to save. In this view of the great scheme of redemption, we see unbounded benevolence, in the provision of atonement ; sincerity, in the unlimited offers of mercy ; deep ingratitude, in their rejection on the part of man ; and matchless grace, in sovereign electing love. Under this view of the subject, God is clear when he judges ; the sinner falls by his own hand ; the saint is an infinite debtor to grace ; and a holy universe views with admiration, the glory of his justice, and his mercy, in their eternal King.

We have said, that this view of the atonement, vindicates the sincerity of God, in the universal, and unlimited offers of the gospel : But how is his sincerity, in these offers to be vindicated, if the atonement was made, only, for a definite number ? If we contemplate it, in the light of a commercial transaction ; and view it as a price paid, for which the salvation of the elect is the equivalent, then, on every principle of sincerity and truth, it can be *offered* only to the elect. And how shall we vindicate the character of God, in commanding the ministers of his gospel, to call all men to repentance ? If there had been no atonement, repentance would have availed nothing ; and if the atonement is in its *nature* limited to a given number, it can still avail nothing, to those who are not of this number. Why then, call them to repentance, when there is no provision of atonement, that would enable God to pardon them, if they should repent ? The *offer* of pardon, or

repentance, is founded exclusively on the atonement ; but if no atonement was made, in the benefits of which, the non-elect could in any state of things become interested ; how can they then, be invited to repentance, under the promise of pardon, if they do repent ? Let the end for which the atonement was made, *be the maintenance and exhibition of the rectitude of God, as moral governour in the pardon of sin*, as we suppose the Bible represents it, and you lay the foundation for the offer of mercy, broad as the guilt and misery of the human family seems to require ; you exhibit God in the attitude of the same benevolence, that he displays in his providential government of mankind ; you open a free course for the invitations of mercy ; and although all men reject these invitations, yet, the benefits of atonement will be rendered sure, to as many of the children of men, as the good of the universe, in the view of the infinitely wise, benevolent, and holy God demands.

This view of atonement, not only, vindicates the sincerity of God, in inviting all men to come to Christ, that they may be saved, but also, leaves the sinner who rejects the offered salvation, without excuse.

It is true in the most absolute and unqualified sense, that whosoever *will*, may come to Christ, and be saved, “ *That in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of him.*”

There is nothing in the nature of the atonement ; nor is there any thing revealed in the Scriptures, that would justify any man, in saying, with regard to the *non-elect*, that they can receive no benefit, by the sacrifice of Christ, although they

were never so willing to embrace him. All the invitations of the gospel are addressed to mankind, as possessing one uniform character, and being in the same lost condition. These invitations are not founded on any secret purpose of God, with regard to any select number of the human family. They contemplate fallen human nature, and are founded on the *atonement*, as God's grand expedient, by which he designed to make to the intelligent universe, the richest displays of his wisdom and mercy, in the pardon of sin.

It surely furnishes a very unlovely representation of the Divine Being, to suppose, that from among a world of outcasts, and rebels, he should select a particular number, and then make just provision enough for *their* salvation, without bringing the remainder, on the ground of trial at all, so as to give them an opportunity, either to choose, or refuse. And this is especially so, when we view this provision as of a governmental nature, and designed to exhibit and illustrate the perfections of the Divine Being, and the moral rectitude of his administration in the forgiveness of sin. Yet, such is the representation we make of him, if we suppose the atonement made only for the elect, and that Christ has done nothing, that would make it consistent for God to save the non-elect, even if they should repent and believe. But how much more lovely, and expressive of dignity, and amiableness of character, to suppose the provision broad as the perishing wants of our fallen family ; its benefits proffered to every son and daughter of man ; and tender invitations, and pressing motives exhibited, to urge all to accept of mercy.



Here we see God acting in all the dignity and glory of his benevolence. The death of his dear Son, removes every obstacle, that his own character and law presented, against the exercise of pardon ; and the foundation, thus laid, for the consistent exhibition of mercy, there is nothing to forbid the proffer of its benefits to every rebel in our fallen world.\*

The order, which, to us it appears, the Bible has established, in relation to this subject, and which, because it is the order that God has pursued, in the successive developements of his wisdom and grace, may be termed the order of nature, is the following.

First, *The provision*—Secondly, *The offer*—Thirdly, *The rejection*, and Lastly, *The sovereign and efficacious purpose* of God in election. Here we see God upon the throne, opening his stores of benevolence to a world of guilt and ruin ; and inviting its whole population, to return to their allegiance. One common murmur of dissatisfaction moves the mighty multitude, who say with united voice, we will not have this man to reign over us. The infinite ONE, as if deeply affected, at this new and aggravated instance of ingratitude and rebellion, to see the Son of his love cast out, by those for whom he died, exclaims, “ *What could have been done more for my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*” As the moral governour, God had gone to the full extent of what he deemed possible, and consistent for him to do—He had opened the door of mercy, and the guilty children of men had shut it against themselves, with their own hands. Here, all would have been lost, and that without remedy, if through the atone-



ment, the way had not been opened, for God to exercise the prerogatives of sovereignty.

Shall I then be permitted, here to say, that God, is laid under a kind of necessity to exercise his sovereignty in *election*, if he would render secure the salvation of one sinner from among men ; and give any efficacy at all, to the atoning sacrifice of his dear Son ? Sinners *will* not save themselves ; and the unwillingness of God, that any should perish, and the infinite *kindness* of his heart, has been abundantly manifested, in that he sent Jesus to die, and by a thousand tender and persuasive arguments, urges us to put our trust in his name. But the invitations of heavenly mercy, fall in vain upon the ear of sin, nor are the tender sympathies of nature excited, by the groans and the blood of Calvary.

If God did not interpose, then, by the sovereignty of his grace, in electing some to everlasting life, and forming them by the mighty energy of the eternal Spirit, for heaven and glory, a darkness more deep than that, which brooded over the chaos of nature, would overspread our guilty world, and thicken upon the night of the dead, with all the horrors of infinite despair.

By the wonderful scheme of pardon through Christ, the creature stands justly condemned, as the guilty author of his own ruin, and God is exalted upon a throne of mercy, the joy of a holy universe, rich in grace, and amiable in the sovereignty of its manifestation.

We have thus, my brethren, exhibited four prominent points, somewhat, though imperfectly, in their connexion

with other leading truths of revelation : as the entire wickedness of the heart of man by nature ; his state of present condemnation, as well as guilt ; the necessity of repentance, faith, regeneration, and holy obedience ; and the sovereignty of grace, both in devising the scheme of saving mercy, and in rendering it effectual, to the salvation of them that believe.

We have a few reflections to make, and our present duty is closed.

1. If such are the truths, which it is the duty of ministers to exhibit, they are under powerful temptations to be unfaithful. The danger to which they are exposed, should excite them to perpetual watchfulness and prayer. They should labour, most incessantly, to cultivate a sense of the presence of God ; and keep their eye intensely fixed upon the great reckoning day.

They know that men love to cherish a spirit of slumber ; and that they never contemplate the danger of their condition, but with the greatest reluctance. They are sensible, that they can be faithful only, at the hazard of exposing themselves to opposition and reproach. It is almost the universal language of men, to their teachers, "*Speak to us smooth things ; prophecy deceits ; cause the holy one of Israel to cease before us.*" It is this common propensity to be left at ease in their sins ; their dread of having their consciences awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger ; their attachment to present good, and their abhorrence of every thing that forces the realities of eternity upon their minds, that makes them prefer the

preacher, who never brings into view, those truths, respecting God, and the retributions of the future world, which are calculated to disturb their quiet, and embitter their earthly joys. Ministers of the gospel, are thence, powerfully tempted to present truth, in the least offensive shape to their hearers, if not sometimes, to suppress it altogether.

Men, naturally, are opposed to the purity, and spirituality of the Christian system. They do not love to feel, that they are in God's hands, that they are bound to submit to his will, and to forego every indulgence, hope, and thought, that may be pleasant to their carnal mind, which he has forbidden. The system of the gospel is a system of self denial. All that God requires man to do, to believe, and to love, is directly repugnant to the natural disposition of his heart. It costs him much trouble to silence his convictions, and keep himself in any tolerable state of ease, on the subject of his obligation to his Maker : and if, after much toil, he has succeeded in establishing a conscience soothing system of faith and practice, he cannot well endure the man, who, by a faithful presentation of truth, shall search out his false refuges, and awaken him out of his delusive dreams.

Hence we see the reason, that the most plain and pungent preachers, have in general, been treated with harsh and opprobrious epithets, whilst those who have exhibited smooth things, that do not disturb the carnal security of sinners, have received their flatteries, and enjoyed their smiles. Such preachers, because they do not dwell on those doctrines of the gospel that are offensive to those who would have a reli-

gion adapted to their own taste, are the elegant, the rational, the consistent preachers. No language of terroure ; no denunciations of the wrath of God against the impenitent, ever escape their lips. They are, "*As a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.*" Such preachers know nothing of the distress of conscience, which an awakened sinner feels. To his tears of penitency, his deep conviction of ingratitude to God, his trembling sense of guilt, his apprehension of danger, his acknowledgment of deserved wrath, they are strangers. But, ah ! my brethren, what will eternity tell, with respect to such preachers, and such hearers ? What will they do, when the midnight enemy shall break upon their slumbers, and destruction shall stand at the door ?

That they may be able to resist the influence of surrounding temptation, let the ministers of the gospel fear God, rather than man. With their eyes fixed on the scenes of the last day, let them remember, that God sees not as man seeth ; that he looks at naked truth, and judges according to facts. With him, the bold assertions of men are like smoke, and cloud. One look of his eye annihilates their hopes for ever, and leaves them, defenceless and trembling, under the piercing view of Omniscience.

2. From the nature of the truths, which it is the duty of the minister of Christ to exhibit, he is warned against the suppression, or modification of them, in accommodation to the flatteries, or frowns of men. He cannot, without nameless guilt, suffer the smiles of men, to beguile him into infidelity to

his Master, nor their frowns, to *drive* him to compromit his honour. But with God, and conscience on his side, he is always safe. His great object should be to bend the whole force of his mind to the investigation of *truth*, and to give up his whole heart, to its *influence*.

All that is true respecting God, and man, and eternity, will ultimately be unfolded to the intelligent universe ; and it will be an honour to appear, in the great day of final manifestation, as having been the unwavering, and strict adherent to the truth of God, as revealed in the Bible. There can be no character, at once, so daring, and impious, as the man, who, professing to be the minister of Jesus Christ, and to stand between the living, and the dead, will nevertheless, regardless of the honour of his Maker, and the immortal wellbeing of the souls committed to his care, from motives of worldly policy, either sacrifice, or suppress, or modify the truth of God. He, who shall dare to go to such length of presumption, must meet at last, with the doom of the unfaithful watchman, and sink to wo, loaded with the guilt of treachery against God, and heaven.

3. Such is the relation and connexion of the great truths, which it is the duty of the minister of the gospel to exhibit, that he cannot, without infidelity to his Master, and a guilty indifference to the good of souls, *select* such topicks for discussion, as he may deem least offensive. He well knows, that those high and important doctrines of the gospel, that invest God with the character of sovereignty ; that represent creatures as in his hands and at his disposal ; that maintain their total moral depravity, and their just desert of wrath, are ex-



ceedingly ungrateful to the feelings of the natural heart : but lightly to pass over them, for this reason, is to set up his own, in opposition to the wisdom of God ; is to give himself up to the dictation of a worldly policy, in direct contrariety to the teachings of the Spirit of all truth.

What God has taught in his word, we ought to conclude, he had the best reasons for teaching : and who can hope to succeed, by declaring that system of instruction imprudent, and dangerous, which has been dictated and sanctioned, by the wisdom of heaven ? The minister of the gospel is an ambassador for Christ. His commission is given him, all filled out to his hands. Nothing is contained in it, that the King did not deem important ; and no man can look upon himself, as having any claim to the character of loyalty, if he does not faithfully deliver the whole of his message.

Let him look at the mighty interests that are committed to his hands : the honour of God ; the glory of the church ; the salvation of souls. Jesus Christ has made it his duty to labour with the people committed to his charge, with a solemn reference to the judgement scene. He cannot discharge his duty, without plainly declaring to them, what God is, and what he requires ; what they themselves are, by nature, and what change of views and feelings, they must experience, if they would hope to meet their Judge in peace. Under these considerations, it is too dreadful, from any motive of human prudence, or policy, or a love of the world, or of popular applause, to barter away the honour of God, and to consent to trifle with souls. Eternity is without end ; and there is no



capacity in the combined methods of computation, to reach the amount of pleasure, or pain, possible, to one soul. 'Tis the truth of God with which we have to do, and he who makes his *selection* from motives of human policy, is guilty of a daring, that would be appalling to the courage of an angel, and well might make a fallen spirit tremble.

Finally,—From the nature of the truths, which it is the duty of the minister of the gospel to exhibit, we see, that the preaching of the cross of Christ, must be attended with a condemning, or saving effect. It will tell, in its results, upon the joys, or sorrows of eternity. Every minister of the gospel, will prove a blessing, or a curse, to those who hear him. He will become the instrument, either of their salvation, or, the occasion, of aggravating, and enhancing their guilt and ruin. He is appointed by Jesus Christ, to communicate truths to his fellow creatures, that deeply interest all holy beings : truths, which point directly to eternity, and with whose train of consequences, will be connected, in endless duration, the songs of glory, or the wailings of wo. Who is able to measure the responsibility attached to an office of such amazing importance, in the nature of its communications, and in its infinite results ?

Brethren, the time is short. In a little moment, the judgement will open upon us, and we shall appear before God—Soon, we shall look with other eyes, and through a different medium, upon the wonders of redemption. Thoughts, of deep and solemn interest, press themselves upon us, in this short, important hour. Time, and death, and judgement, and

heaven, and hell. The shouts of the victor, and the possession of glory ; the cry of the vanquished enemies of God, and the prison of their wo. O may we stand at last before the judge, with garments, unspotted with the blood of lost souls.

## SERMON X.

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*"Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things."*

LUKE xvi, 25.

IN his life time ! Where was he now, that his life time should be spoken of as a season already past ? "*In hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment.*" And who was he ? A man, who in his life time, had been the possessor of great wealth ; who had gratified his appetite with sumptuous living, and indulged his love of display, by clothing himself in purple and fine linen.

He is addressed in the text, and is represented in the context, as an active, conscious being. He is called to remember the past ; to look back on his life time : and he is directed to this recollection of the events of his time, and what he then enjoyed, as constituting the ground, or reason, that the request he had made, that Lazarus might impart to his tongue the comfort of one drop of water, was not granted. He had *had* his day, and he had lived it down. It had been crowded with blessings ; but he had not improved them for eternity and the good of his soul. He freely used what heaven be-

stowed, to gratify his pride of distinction and wealth ; but under the multiplied blessings he enjoyed, he neither revered nor regarded, the God that gave them. As the swine never looks up, while he is feeding upon the acorns that are falling from the oak, so neither did this rich man raise a thought on high, or feel, for a transient moment, the glow of a grateful emotion, towards the rich source of all his mercies. The dews and the rains of heaven moistened his fields, and the earth yielded her increase. His graneries were filled, and his board was crowned with plenty. In the possession of great riches, he was above the fear of want ; and unwilling to hoard like the miser, or like the prodigal to throw away, without reason, and without object, he supplied himself, not only liberally, but sumptuously also, with all that he desired to gratify his appetite, to decorate his person, or to adorn and beautify his princely habitation.

If the possession of the world, and a taste for the enjoyment of it, would ever engage the heart to love God, the case of the rich man was one, where such a result might have been expected. But, surrounded with a profusion of mercies, his heart is estranged from God, and destitute of every pious feeling. He holds his wealth, merely for the purpose of controlling the means of his own gratification, and beyond this, he extends neither a thought, nor a care. He loved his money, because it was the instrument of his happiness ; and if he ever loved his fellow creatures, it was for the same reason. His heart never knew, what it was to be influenced by a disinterested emotion. His bosom never heaved a sigh for

the afflicted, nor did his eye, ever shed a tear, over the sufferings of the poor.

On a certain occasion, one, in the extremest state of wretchedness, and want, was laid at his gate, and begged only for bread, for the crumbs that fell from his table ; but he would sooner give the offings of his luxury to the dogs of his kennel, that they might minister to his pleasure in the chase, than to bestow them, for his comfort and sustenance, upon a starving fellow man.

Doubtless the rich man was not wanting, in all those refinements of character and feeling, that were adapted, and common to the circle in which he moved. It was not because he regarded the value of what the beggar asked, nor because he felt any particular hardness towards the poor in general, that he was indifferent to an object so deserving of his compassion. He was absorbed in other concerns. He could not stop to consider the case, and order the necessary relief. He had his plans, and projects to pursue ; his appointments for sport and pleasure to attend to. His attention could not be arrested long enough, nor could he submit to the interruption it would occasion, to give audience to a detail of the circumstances attending the case of the poor man. The sufferings of a fellow creature, starving, sore, and friendless, were of too little amount, to awaken his sympathy, and draw him aside from his usual course of indulgence. He drove away after the world, and after his pleasures, as if all about him, besides the immediate object of pursuit, was useless and contemptible. He acted, as if all the world was made

for himself, and yet, as if *he* was under obligations to nobody. By what means soever, he might have acquired his fortune, of one thing we are certain, that his heart was set upon his wealth, and upon his pleasures. If he acquired it by unjust means, so much the more *guilty* was he, as he probably, had brought others to emptiness, to create a fulness for himself. He felt not the force of obligation to the Supreme Being ; and lived without God in the world. He had no hope ; nor does it appear that he desired any. The divinity that administered to his comfort was his servant. 'Twas his money. His conduct seems strongly to indicate, that he was willing, that the whole amount of enjoyment possible to him, as a creature, should be thrown into his life time ; and that he was prepared to commit his eternal concerns, to what eternity itself might develope.

Thus powerfully attached to the world, and absorbed in its hopes, he passed away a life of gayety, and mirth, and luxury, and splendour, indifferent to religion, thoughtless of death, unconcerned about futurity, and without regard for his Maker.

The last act of his life presents him to us, under most unlovely circumstances. We see in him, an insensibility of heart, that shocks every fine feeling of our nature. A suffering, helpless fellow being, is totally disregarded by him, and dies for want, in the midst of profusion. God, in his wise providence, and doubtless with his eye fixed upon the event which was to follow, had brought Lazarus to the gate of the rich man, that an opportunity might be afforded him to exhibit



the feelings, and true character of his heart. He had appointed all the interesting incidents, that immediately preceded the death of these two individuals, for the more clear display, and development, of the wisdom, and equity, of his providential dealings ; and to vindicate the righteousness of his decision in their case, on the great reckoning day. They are both called into the eternal world, probably, at the same time. The one, comes to the grave, under all the pomp and parade of funeral ceremony, that is common to men of princely fortune, and worldly grandeur ; the other has no one that can point out the place of his burial, or tell that a tear was shed when he died. But in eternity, they appear under infinitely different circumstances. There, their condition is reversed ; and their endless destiny is settled, according to the moral character of each. Lazarus is happy, and the rich man is most miserable. He recognizes, in the bosom of Abraham, the poor man, who, but a few days before, lay at his gate, and was neglected. He pleads for relief, and receives the reply contained in the text, "*Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things.*"

We shall follow what has now been said, with several remarks.

1. God does not exercise towards the wicked, a revengeful, and angry spirit. He does not punish them, for the purpose of gratifying such a spirit. His heart is deeply, and tenderly affected, with the wretchedness of their condition. He takes no delight in their suffering, in itself considered. He feels the same spirit of compassionate tenderness towards

the damned, so far as they are regarded, merely in the light of miserable beings, that he has so abundantly declared in his word, and exhibited in his providences, towards impenitent sinners. But when God views the sufferings of sinners, as the wages of their iniquity, and contemplates their miserable condition, as the necessary consequence of their guilty character, he feels that their sufferings are just ; and whilst he looks, with infinite complacency upon those eternal principles of his own moral administration, which require, that the wicked should be doomed to endless despair, he nevertheless takes no pleasure in their suffering. “ *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.*” Abraham is represented as addressing the rich man, in a kind and tender manner—“ *Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things.*” This expression of tenderness towards the unhappy sufferer, is not, however, at all incompatible with an entire acquiescence in the misery of his condition, nor with a determination, on the part of God, to inflict, and perpetuate, during eternity, the very sufferings which awaken the sympathies of his own bosom. Whilst he feels for sinners as miserable beings, he does not forget, that as guilty creatures, they deserve to endure the endless agonies of the second death.

The compassionate judge, when he pronounces sentence of death on the criminal, has all the sympathy of his nature moved, in looking at the unhappy situation of the culprit ; but with a steady regard for the law, which contemplates the security and promotion of social happiness, and awed by the

dignity and majesty of justice, he pronounces him guilty, and hands him over to the executioner.

Thus my friends, will it be with our God, when we shall come to stand before him, in the last day. If we are guilty, the regard which he has for himself, and for the universe that is dependent on him, for existence, and happiness, must lead him to pronounce sentence of condemnation on us, and whilst he does so, he will call all heaven to witness, that he does not make us miserable, to gratify a capricious and tyrannical spirit, nor, because he feels no sympathy for our wretchedness, but, because our moral character is such, that his justice demands our condemnation.

The rich man spent his life, in any thing, besides the love, and obedience of God ; and now that he has passed into the eternal world where passions, and prejudices cease to pervert the judgement, he is called to remember how he had lived in time ; as if, in the recollection of his past life, he could not fail to see the righteousness of God's dealings towards him, in placing him in the world of despair. This seems, indeed, to have been the conviction of his own mind, resulting from the review, to which he was directed. He ceases to supplicate any further for personal relief, and thus seems to acquiesce in the righteousness of his condemnation.

2. Sinners will be called on in eternity, to remember their time. This we perceive was the case with the rich man. This will be the case with each of you, my friends, who shall live and die in impenitency. How dreadful will be the review. Conscience, emancipated from her servitude to lust,

quick, both to the discovery, and sensibility of guilt, will enter upon a faithful review of your day of probation, when its sun shall have set to rise no more. How will it lead you back to the times and places of your youthful mirth and revelry? How will it set before you, the midnight iniquity, the sin of shame that shrinks from human view? The pleasure rides of the Sabbath, and the secret gaming table, to which you may have stolen with many a conscious blush of shame? How will it tell you of neglected obligations to your family, to society, to yourselves? Of unhappy habits of intemperance, in yourselves; or an utter indifference to the welfare of others, when you saw them carelessly treading the way to ruin? How will it ring in your ears the number of violated Sabbaths, and tell of the neglected sanctuary of our God? Ah! how will the warnings, the entreaties, the invitations, that have been addressed to you from this sacred place, be presented in solemn, and overwhelming succession, and each in its turn force from you the concession—"God was right and we were wrong." When God said to the rich man, "*Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things*"—his lips were sealed, as it regarded any further petition on his own behalf. He reviewed his time and he was speechless.

When God shall say to you, dying sinner—"Remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things"—a transient review of the past, a momentary recollection of God dishonoured, of heaven rejected, of dying love despised, will make your heart-strings vibrate with thrilling horror and force you

to acknowledge, amidst the writhing agonies of your torment, that "God is right, and you are wrong."

3. The joys of the sinner are few, unsatisfying, and transient. Those faculties of our being, that are adapted to earthly enjoyments merely, are very limited in their number. Our desires, after one kind of gratification and another, are almost uniformly excessive, and reach forward after objects, that lie beyond the point of attainment, possible, to our present state and circumstances. The gratifications of avarice, the indulgence of animal appetite, and the exhibition of worldly grandeur, dictated by pride, seem to constitute about the sum of all the means of enjoyment, that appertain exclusively, to the present life. And what are these, when, to the full extent of our desires, we have attained them all? The nature and constitution of the soul is such, that it seeks after enjoyments, that it aspires to attainments, which earth and time have not to offer. After all that this world can give, there is a void left in that immortal part of our nature, which can be satisfied only, by those objects which eternity presents. How soon do those gratifications that are limited to our animal natures, satiate and cloy. Habitual indulgence destroys the susceptibilities, and delicacy of our sensations, and not unfrequently converts into objects of loathing and disgust, what we esteemed our richest means of gratification. Take for instance, the habitual drunkard. He has doubtless, a momentary pleasure, of a mere animal character, in the gratification of his taste, and in the indulgence of his feelings. But look at his bloated, burning face; his bloodshot eyeballs; his swollen tongue; his



tottering walk ; his low, groveling, filthy company, and conversation ; his blunted sensibility to shame ; his decayed fortune ; his blushing children, and his weeping wife—and what a train of ruin, disgrace, and sin, does he drag along his idle, guilty course, of daily drunkenness ? The gratification of other appetites, 'tis true, may not be attended with so much, that reduces him to a level with mere animal nature ; but in *all*, the heart is estranged from God, and far removed from those fine emotions of ingenuousness and gratitude, that characterize the man who loves his Maker, and is submissive to his will.

But with all that earth can yield of pleasure, how short its stay, as well as unsatisfying its nature ? The rich man with all his wealth, and luxury, and pride, and friends, was not so great, and powerful, as to forbid the approach of death ; nor did his wealth, or dignity or honours, avail any thing, when he appeared before the impartial bar of God. Here prince, and subject, rich man, and poor, meet on the same level, and are tried by the same unerring, and eternal rule of right. The infinite God approaches him regardless of the wealth, and the distinctions that marked his time, any farther, than he views them as the occasion of aggravating his guilt, and of multiplying upon him the horrors of his condition in wo. He pronounces his sentence of condemnation, as fully, and freely, as if, covered with all his moral pollution, he had also appeared in poverty and rags.

With his short life time, ended all the rich man's joys and hopes. “ *He died and was buried ; and in hell he lifted up*



*his eyes being in torments.*” And thus, my friends, it must be, with those of you, who have your hope and portion in this world. Now all is well, and gay, and blithesome. The blood flows freely in your veins ; business prospers ; you are increasing in goods, and you anticipate much for time to come. But to-morrow, eternity opens upon you ; and in one sad, tremendous moment, unexpected, you realize all that you had feared about the future world ; and shrouded in endless night, with this short life, the all of your day of peace, and joy, is gone for ever.

4. The love of wealth, and worldly gratifications is the ruin of many souls. There is nothing evil in riches, in themselves, if properly employed, and improved, they are, like all the bounties of heaven, a real blessing. But to transfer to this world, those affections that ought to be exclusively fixed on God, is despising the giver, by idolizing the gift.

The rich man was not to blame for having wealth ; but for setting his heart upon it. Having abundance, he devoted himself to high living, and set his heart upon it. Having abundance, he made great display, and set his heart upon it. Now, although he might have been of some more advantage to society, than the miser, who starves his body, that he may hoard his money ; yet, in the sight of God, he possesses no better character. His heart is not set on God. He cares nothing about the honour and glory of his Maker. Driving after the world, and his pleasures, he lives regardless of all moral obligation. His whole soul is fixed on present good. He does not, doubtless, intend finally to neglect his soul ; he

does not *mean* to fail of heaven. The thought of everlasting burnings is shocking to the feelings of his heart ; but he shall by and by have accomplished all that he desires of worldly attainment, and then, when the point which he has marked out to himself, shall have been gained, he will engage in the business of securing heaven. “ *But the lord of that servant came in a day when he looked not for him, and in an hour when he thought not of him.*” He found him neglectful of duty, cruel to his fellows, full of worldly goods, gay and mirthful ; and appointed him a place “ *with hypocrites and unbelievers, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*”

It is not to be rich, that endangers you, my friends. It is to love riches more than God. It is to pursue the world, to the neglect of God, and your own salvation. The man of very moderate circumstances may love the world as strongly, as the man of overgrown fortune. And 'tis the *love* of the world, that is enmity against God, and that ruins the soul.

Ah, how many thousands, are fearfully receiving their good things in this life ! How many of you, my dear friends, are pressing with all your might after the world, whilst you so entirely neglect your souls, that you drop not a prayer for them, nor heave a sigh of penitency, for the sins with which you are loading yourselves down, to appear before God in the judgement. O, should you die to-day, under what circumstances in eternity, would you lift up your eyes to look upon the face of your Judge.

5. Sinners look in vain for forgiveness after death. The present alone, is a day of probation. All beyond, is a solemn,

and endless, and unmingled retribution. Those who have received their good things in this life, must have a hopeless, and wretched prospect before them, in that eternity upon which they shall enter, when God shall take away their souls. To-day then, my friends, is a most important and solemn period with you. Your probationary sun shines with bright and inviting beams. All along your path, you meet with warnings and entreaties. Now, that you are hastening your way to the night of the dead, improve the moments as they fly. O, let not the darkness overtake you, and find you at enmity with your Maker. Be not satisfied with receiving your good things in your life time. Stretch your hand, and glance your eyes to the heavenly world. Feel that eternity lies before you. Be moved by the invitations of your compassionate Redeemer. Raise your heart to the world's victim for sin. Bow at his feet, and live for ever.



## SERMON XI.

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*“ Quench not the Spirit.”*

I. THESS. v. 19.

THE Spirit is here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, compared to fire. There is no other element to which we apply the term quench. The influences of the Spirit are as essential to the comfort and happiness of the soul, as fire is, to the comfort of the body. Would our temporal blessings perish without the latter ; we can have no spiritual enjoyments without the former.

The exhortation, *“ Quench not the Spirit,”* appears exceedingly important, and much in point, when we view it in connexion with the preceding context. The apostle had said, *“ Rejoice ever more.” “ Pray without ceasing.” “ In every thing give thanks.”* But how are these great duties to be performed ? The selfishness of our hearts, is opposed to the disinterestedness required in the first. Our love of ease and indulgence, to the painful and laborious effort, and incessant watchings required in the second. Our natural insensibility to kindnesses received, and our pride of heart, to the

sense of obligation and of entire dependence required in the third. To the faithful, acceptable, and comforting performance of the duties to which we are here exhorted, we need the aid of the Holy Spirit. Without his gracious enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying influences, we shall make not an effort, either for the glory of God, nor for our own, nor the salvation of our fellow men. Would we then enjoy God ; would we be faithful, diligent and persevering in the discharge of the duty of prayer ; would we enjoy the blessedness of a grateful heart, we must not quench the Spirit.

That we may be profited by this important portion of God's word, it is my design to speak—

I. OF OUR NEED OF THE SPIRIT'S INFLUENCES.

II. OF THE MANNER IN WHICH WE MAY QUENCH HIS INFLUENCES.

III. OF SOME OF THE RESULTS CONSEQUENT ON QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

I. OF OUR NEED OF THE SPIRIT'S INFLUENCES.

We need the influences of the Spirit—

1. Because the Spirit is the great agent, in promoting conviction of sin. In this department of his agency, his influences are as important to sinners, as to saints. And the exhortation, "*Quench not the Spirit,*" addresses itself with solemn import to every unsanctified person. Whilst it is true, that the exhortation relates principally, to the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of God's people, it is at the same time true, that sinners are solemnly warned not to resist his strivings with them.



It is the appropriate office work of the Spirit, "*to reprove*" or convince "*the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.*" No other agent in the universe can work so deep and effectual a conviction in the sinner's heart. Man naturally does not feel that he is a great sinner, and that sin is very odious. He does not see why it is, that God has expressed such abhorrence of it; and thence, uninfluenced by the Spirit, he is not under any very serious apprehensions as it regards the consequences of sin, with reference to his own personal happiness. Sin is very natural to him. He is so entirely devoted to his own individual enjoyment, and is so in the habit of feeling that every thing around him may be employed by him to promote it, that he loses sight of the interests and happiness of those about him, and even of the being and government of God, any farther than the whole may seem necessary to the attainment of the private and individual good which he seeks.

This spirit of entire selfishness, would fill our world with wrath and death, were it not that the Holy Ghost reproves of sin, and by his invisible, and powerful agency keeps more or less alive, in the consciences of men, a sense of guilt, and a dread apprehension of the retributions of the future world. His restraining influences, by the method of operation now noticed, are an incalculable blessing to the human family. Those who are utterly abandoned of the Holy Ghost, are like infernal spirits, clothed in human flesh, that cast a lowering look of malignity and vengeance on all around them, that tells us, in language not to be misapprehended, that they

would rejoice in the utter extermination of all that is amiable, and virtuous, and wise, and good, both in created, and uncreated being.

Without the influences of this mighty agent, not a sinner would be brought to such a conviction of his guilt and ruin, as to lead him to accept of the method of deliverance, which the wisdom and mercy of God has provided. The Holy Ghost, only, can let light in upon the soul of guilt with such a full, clear, and resistless blaze, as to make the heart melt, and the will bow, and to bring down the apostate outlaw, at the feet of sovereignty.

To lay my remarks and my principle together ; and to place both as close by the side of your consciences, as I am able, permit me to entreat those of you, who are impenitent, to be careful, how you treat the strivings of the blessed Spirit with you. He is the great applying agent of the redemption scheme. He is God's last gift to a dying world. Grieve you him away, and you are as certainly undone for eternity, as you have existence. Neglect you to seek with all your souls, his aid, you neglect the only being who can do you good. Trifle you with the gracious and tender movings of the Holy Ghost, and you border hard upon that sin, for which there is forgiveness, neither in this world, nor that which is to come. O, sinner, you are gone for ever, if the Holy Ghost gives you up.

But the Spirit acts, also, as an agent to promote conviction in the hearts of the regenerate. They are prone to forget, to wander from the path of duty, to lose a sense of divine

things, to do that, often, which is very unseemly for Christians. And doubtless, the people of God would frequently go very far astray, if the Holy Spirit did not reprove them. By his kind and heavenly influences, he opens the eyes of their minds to see their guilt. He softens their hearts and brings them to melt at the feet of forgotten and abused mercy. He awakens them afresh to a deep sense of sin, and calls them to mourn anew over the folly and guilt of their lives. Were it not for his convicting agency, not only would sinners remain hardened in impenitency, but backsliding Christians also, would never return to duty.

Let the children of God, then, most solemnly feel, that their only hope of being restored to the light of his countenance, and of being brought once more to know the joy of his salvation, lies in the helping agency of the Eternal Spirit. Do you desire to be made sensible of your wanderings ; do you desire to see more of the plague of your own heart ; would you be brought to feel deeply your dependence, and to realize your obligations, pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that he may search you and try you.

2. The Holy Spirit is the great agent in regeneration ; and in this particular, his influences are of the last importance to our guilty race.

The necessity of regeneration, is abundantly taught in the Scriptures. It is founded on the affecting and solemn truth, that the heart is totally alienated from God, by wicked works ; that it is enmity against God ; utterly destitute of every thing that is morally good, and abhorrent to the sight of a holy, sin-

hating God. No man can enter into the kingdom of heaven, no man can enjoy the friendship of God, who is not born again. But it is the appropriate office-work of the Holy Spirit to renovate the soul. The work of regeneration can only be accomplished by his agency. If he does not create us anew in Christ Jesus, we shall die in our sins, and be lost.

Look at your dependence on this blessed Agent, O sinner. Cherish his influences ; entreat him, with all your soul, to create you anew, and qualify you for the society and employments of heaven. Feel, that it is by the manner in which you treat the Holy Spirit, that you will be sealed to heaven, or to hell.

Let those who hope that the Holy Spirit has made them alive to God, and to the hope of glory, feel their deep indebtedness to him, for his wonderful condescension. Let them show their gratitude, by their humility, by their meekness, by their holy life, their fervent prayers, and their unreserved devotedness to the glory of him who has redeemed them. Let them guard against a spirit of self-exaltation, and of boasting. Let them walk softly before God. Let them remember, that they will be ready, if they ever reach heaven, to take a very low place, and that the very best evidence they can now have, that they partake in any measure of the Spirit of heaven, lies in their indisguised, and unconstrained willingness to take a low place now.

Ah ! my friends, what have we of spiritual attainment, and spiritual loveliness, that we did receive ? Can we, in the pride of our self-sufficiency, commit, shall I say, a sort of sacrilege,

by appropriating to ourselves, the praise of a moral worth of character, for which we are wholly indebted to the infinitely condescending agency of the Holy Ghost? O let us never indulge, for a moment, a desire to divide the glory of our salvation, with the great Author of our sanctification. Let us rather labour to have our minds continually, more and more deeply impressed with a sense of our obligation to the blessed Spirit of all grace; and feel, that as we are dependent on him to create us anew, we are also dependent on him for every right thought, and every good feeling.

3. The Spirit is the great agent of sanctification; and in this department of his agency, the saints stand in peculiar need of his influences. In promoting their progressive sanctification, he enlightens their minds, inspires them with a desire for improvement in the knowledge of God, and excites in their hearts an increasing love for the truth. He makes them more and more acquainted with their own hearts; opens to them from time to time their secret, selfish springs of action, and thus awakens in them, a spirit of holy self-loathing and abhorrence. From this state of feeling, they are very naturally led to see, and admire, more and more, the purity and benevolence of God, the odious nature of sin, and the unlovely spirit of selfishness which is so congenial to their remaining, unsubdued corruptions.

The Spirit also inspires them with feelings of benevolence; turns their hearts to desire the salvation of their fellow men; excites them to prayer, and effort; and makes them willing to make sacrifices of ease, and comfort, and worldly goods,

for the glory of the Redeemer, and the good of souls. He often, to their view, clothes vice in an unlovely and disgusting garb, and exhibits virtue in all the adornments of loveliness, and all the attractions of beauty. He discloses under various aspects of charm, and endearment, as well as grandeur, and glory, the perfection, and rectitude of the Divine character, and government.

The methods of his culture are as various, as the instruments by which he is able to operate. He excites, attracts, melts, moves, in such a manner, as to his infinitely benevolent mind seems best adapted for their growth and improvement. He elevates them to joy ; awakens them to ardour of devotion ; draws forth their tears of penitency ; and brings them in humble, childlike submission at the feet of Jesus. He sanctifies to them all their hopes and their fears, all their sorrows, and their joys. Under his kind influences, the tears of their affliction, cleanse the impurities of their hearts ; the rod of correction gives strength to their confidence, and fervency to their love ; and at length, he makes to them, the very gates of the grave, the portals of eternal day. It is through his agency, that all things are made to work for good to them that love God. Under his mighty guidance, and constantly sanctifying influence, they shall go from strength to strength, through all the night of time, and shall at length be presented faultless before the throne of God and the Father, where the light of uncreated glory shall fall upon their eyes, and the untold wonders of heaven, shall wake their powers, to immortal song. O Christian, did you ever feel deeply



enough, your indebtedness to the infinitely blessed Agent of sanctification? How often, alas, have we undervalued his influences, when we have tried the Christian race in our own strength; or have gone forth to the battle, not clad in the panoply of the soldiers of the Cross.

May it not be well for each of us, seriously to inquire, whether our progress in the divine life has not been essentially retarded, by the fact, that we have not been sufficiently sensible of our dependence on the agency of the Holy Spirit; and thence have not sought his aid, with that ardour, and tenderness, and confidence, which are essential to growth in sanctification?

We look now—

## II. TO THE MANNER IN WHICH WE MAY QUENCH THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT.

Is he the great Agent in promoting conviction? Does he awaken and alarm sinners? Does he set the sins of God's people in order before them? How often are his influences quenched, by the indulgence of improper and base passions and appetites; and by suffering ourselves to run into unlawful excess in those things, which, when moderately pursued, are both consistent and right.

The sinner often quenches the Spirit, by seeking to dissipate his apprehensions of evil, and to drive away his conviction of guilt, in circles of gayety and mirth; or by purposely avoiding those means, by which his impressions might be deepened. We have reason to believe, that many sinners have driven from their minds, the most solemn impressions of

guilt and danger, which the Spirit has wrought in them, by speaking lightly of his influences, and in the folly of their hearts, labouring to persuade their associates in sin, that they care for none of these things. The way of sin is easy and natural to them. An awakened conscience, a conviction of guilt, creates alarm and uneasiness. The way of religion looks to them like a way of toil, of self-denial, and of gloom. They dread to look at their own hearts. They tremble to cast forward their anticipations to eternity. They are filled with awe and horror, when they seriously think, that they must one day stand before God in the judgement. These things, when forced upon them by the convicting agency of the Spirit, fill them with trouble and perplexity. In a course of unthinking indulgence, they have no such alarms and fears ; and that they may be restored to their wonted state of ease, and indifference, they will labour to banish all serious thought from the minds ; neglect all means of instruction ; oppose the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel ; find fault with the government of God ; busy themselves in condemning the conduct of Christians ; and so make their way to hell over the imperfections of God's people. O, sinner, remember, I entreat you, that if you successfully quench the Spirit, until you come to stand before your Judge, you are kindling a flame upon yourself, that no power in the universe shall ever be able to extinguish. The fire of the Spirit, which you are labouring to quench, is the purifying fire of love. Its direct design, as well as its effect, is, to purify and to save. Resist you his influences, you are preparing for a flame that shall burn to

the lowest pit, "*The pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it.*"

But it cannot be considered a matter of much surprise, that sinners should labour to quench the Spirit. They have never tasted the joy of pardoned sin, nor felt that calm and heavenly peace of mind, which those have experienced who have been born of God, and have lifted up their voice, and cried in the spirit of adoption, "*ABBA FATHER.*" That the children of hope, however, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, should quench the Spirit, the Spirit who has sealed them the heirs of glory, may well awaken our surprise, and lead us to join with the prophet in exclaiming, "*Be astonished, O, ye heavens at this, and be very horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord, for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*"

Christians quench the Spirit, when they do not cultivate a sense of their dependence on him, and the peculiar obligations they are under to him, as the applier of the purchased redemption to their souls. It is quite certain, when they have not a deep sense of their need of the Spirit's assistance, that they are not faithful, and tender, and ardent, and constant in prayer. No child of God can pray with an humble, a meek, and believing temper of heart, who does not feel the influences of the Spirit, and who will not, at the same time, gratefully acknowledge, that the Spirit has wrought his "faith, and love, and every grace."

Christians quench the Spirit when they neglect prayer. Indeed, they have already quenched the Spirit, if they neglect prayer. The holiness, and consistency of the Christian's life will always be proportionate, to the constancy, fidelity, and ardour of his prayers. It is not necessary to ask a Christian whether he prays, to ascertain whether he does or not. Look at his walk and conversation. Is he light, trifling, gay, absorbed in the world, absent from the social praying circle, ready to talk of every thing else besides religion, pleased with the fashion and the splendour of the world ; always able to find time to devote to pleasure, or the pursuit of gain ; never introducing religious conversation himself, and passing it off when introduced by others, as soon as possible ? It is not necessary to ask, whether he prays. Such a state, and such a course of conduct, never attend a man of constant, ardent, believing, and humble prayer. Such a state, and such a course of conduct do not meet the exhortation of the apostle, to his Ephesian brethren, when, after having entreated them to put on the whole armour of God, he closes by telling them, *“to pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch unto prayer with all perseverance.”*

The Christian who is alive to a sense of duty, and to the dangers that crowd upon his path, will both see, and feel the necessity of watchfulness. Conscious of his own weakness, and knowing that all his sufficiency is of God, he will never lay down his watch, lest in some unguarded moment he may be surprised into sin, to the wounding of his own soul, and to the dishonouring of the cause, which he loves. He will

therefore watch unto prayer, with unceasing and unremitting perseverance.

What can a professed child of God do, if he cannot go at all times, and with the feeling of a child, and open his heart to his heavenly Father? How dreadful is the injury which he inflicts on himself, if by neglecting to watch unto prayer, he quenches the Spirit, and shuts himself out from the throne of mercy? How ungrateful is he, and how unwise, to neglect his only *Helper* from heaven?

Christians may quench the Spirit, both by the *neglect* of closet duty; and the *manner* in which they perform it. Religion is a concern, so far as regards both the exercises, and the evidence of personal piety, that lies between their own souls, and their Maker. Hence the sweetest and richest consolations of religion cannot but consist, in that secret intercourse with heaven, where they may unbosom themselves to God, and pour the honest and undisguised tear of penitency at his feet. If, in the closet, they have no tender, and endearing communion with God; if in that sweet place, consecrated to the secrecy of a full confession of the sins of the heart, as well as those of the life, there are no meltings of the soul, no ardent breathing after growing conformity to the likeness of Christ, no full and unrestrained confessions, no brokenness of spirit under a sense of ingratitude, where, my dear brethren, is the evidence that they know any thing of the Lord Jesus Christ, "*in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his suffering?*" Shall they look back to past experience, and build their present hope, amidst dark-



ness, and coldness, and sin, upon the light, and the warmth, and the faithfulness of former days? We look in vain to the past, as furnishing any evidence of a gracious estate, if such review, leaves us still in a state of insensibility and indifference. If it awakens us; if it brings us to renewed repentance; if it makes our sorrows bleed afresh; if it makes us feel a spirit of self-condemnation; and excites in us a holy sympathy with our Lord and master, when we look at his wounded honour; then indeed, may we hope, that our past experience was of the operation of the Spirit, and that there is, even now, some good thing in us towards the God of our salvation.

Christians may quench the Spirit, by the cold and heartless performance, or neglect of family prayer; by the unsteady observance of duty; by satisfying themselves with light and trifling excuses for the neglect of duty; by neglecting to cultivate their minds, and to improve in a knowledge, and understanding of the great truths of the gospel; by not labouring to keep the heart; by resisting the intimations of the Spirit, when he urges duty upon them; by forsaking the assembling of themselves together; by seldom conversing with each other on the love of Christ, on the condescensions of the Spirit, and on the wisdom and benevolence of the Godhead, as displayed in the matchless scheme of pardoning mercy; and finally, by not labouring to maintain a constant spirit of prayer; so as to meet the injunction of the apostle, "*Be instant in season and out of season. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*"—.



We speak—

### III. OF SOME OF THE RESULTS CONSEQUENT ON QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

Of these we can merely enumerate a few.

Little or no evidence of piety will be furnished either by individuals, or by a church, who have quenched the Spirit. The professed friends of Christ, will differ very little in their walk and conversation, from the mere men of the world.—Duty will become burdensome to them. Christ will look less amiable and lovely. His cause will not appear so important. There will be serious misgivings of heart, on the subject of the great benevolent operations of Christ's friends. A reluctant coming up, in the offering of worldly goods, to further the designs of benevolence. The souls of sinners will not appear so valuable. Neither heaven, nor hell will seem so real: Whilst the world, and the joys which it has to offer, will both seem, more important, and command more attention. The fashion of the world will look fascinating; its pleasures, its wealth and its honours will become objects of supreme concern, and God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and all that is great in wisdom, and lovely in benevolence, and tender and melting in mercy, will either be passed by and neglected, or will be treated with the slight attentions of a chilling formality, even by those for whom the blood of Jesus has streamed forth, that they might be washed, that they might be sanctified, that they might be fitted for the society, and employments, and felicities of the world of glory. Our beauty will fade away, sinners will go on in impenitency, and

fall, and perish ; and fewer jewels, composed of ransomed souls, shall sparkle in the Redeemer's crown, if we quench the influences of that heavenly Agent who seals us to the hope of eternal life.

I ask you now, children of the hope of redemption, what say your closets ? What say your family altars ? What say the whisperings of conscience ? What would the Saviour say, should he break upon us with his heavenly presence, in this moment of our devotions ?

Quench not the Spirit. Put not out this light from heaven. Extinguish not the last spark on which the hope of mercy gleams.

I would exhort and entreat you too, my dear impenitent friends, that you resist not, that you quench not, that you grieve not the Holy Spirit. Remember that it is the peculiar and appropriate office-work of the Holy Spirit to apply the redemption purchased by Christ, to the souls of sinners. He is God's last, best gift to man. To treat contemptuously the Holy Ghost, and speak lightly of his influences, is opposing the combined and concentrated efforts of the Godhead to save a rebel world. It is with one presumptuous, daring act, pouring contempt upon the high heavens, and directing the malignancy of all your passions, towards that manifestation of benignity and grace, in which we see united, infinite in means, extent, and energy, the wisdom, and the mercy, and the power of God. Quench not the Spirit. Put not out this light from heaven. Extinguish not, dying immortal, the last spark on which the hope of pardon gleams.

## SERMON XII.

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*"God be merciful to me a sinner."*

LUKE xviii. 13.

THIS impassioned and affecting cry to God for mercy, was uttered by one of two men, who went up to the temple to pray. The account that is given of them when they reached the temple, and of the manner in which they respectively performed the duty before them, is adapted both to interest, and to instruct.

We have here an exhibition of the heart of man, when he does not see his own vileness and impurity, but feels as if he were righteous ; and also, when he is brought to a discovery, and sense of his moral character, as it is in fact, and as it must appear in the sight of God. We see too, how very differently men feel, both towards God and themselves, in the performance of one and the same duty. One may address God with great confidence and boldness, as if conscious of his own worth and excellency. Another, may come, with the profoundest sense of his vileness, and a deep conviction of his desert of wrath. One may treat the Almighty, almost

as if he were an equal. Another may approach him, with solemn, reverential awe. One may be ready to dictate a course to his Maker, that it would be proper for him to pursue, and treat with him on the principles of ordinary courtesy between equals. Another will throw himself into the hands of gracious sovereignty, and rest all his hopes, on the hitherto neglected, and abused mercy of his God. In the parable of which our text is a part, the remarks which we have now made, are exemplified with peculiar force and interest.

Of the two men who went up to the temple to pray, the one was a Pharisee. The sect to which he belonged were distinguished for their austerities, and for their numerous formalities in religion. They felt themselves not warranted to hold communion and intercourse with others of their nation, and both in their dress, and in some peculiarities in the externals of their devotion, set themselves up as the nearest, if not the exclusive favourites of heaven. "*They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.*" They were in the habit of wearing phylacteries, certain words of the Law of Moses, written on parchment, and folded in a peculiar manner, upon their foreheads, and on their left arm. They also appeared in publick, in long flowing robes, different from those in common use. These peculiarities, designated the sect to which they belonged.

We see now, an individual of this sect going up to the temple to pray ; and the inquiry addresses itself with force to our mind : What is the temper of heart, with which a man, holding these views of exclusive favouritism with heaven, and

thus confident, and complacent in his own righteousness, will address the Supreme Majesty on high ? He opens his lips with expressions of gratitude. But what is he grateful for ? That God had spared his unprofitable, guilty, and forfeited life ? That he was out of hell ? That he was still on pleading terms with his Maker ; and could yet address the voice of prayer towards his throne ? Thankful for the divine condescension, that would permit a rebel like himself to approach his mercy seat ? Far from it. Hear the representation which Christ has given of this Pharisees' prayer. "*God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*" How ignorant was this poor man of his heart ; and how little must he have known of the nature and genius of religion. Had it even been true, that so far as the external act was concerned, he had not been guilty of extortion, injustice and impurity, crimes charged upon his sect, by the Saviour, yet, if he had been in the smallest measure acquainted with the corruption of his heart, and with the innumerable wicked feelings which he doubtless was in the habit of indulging, instead of appearing before the Searcher of hearts, with a spirit of self-complacency, and telling his Maker of his good deeds, he would have prostrated himself in the dust, and have exclaimed, with a trembling and afflicted prophet—"*Wo is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips.*"

The publican, who accompanied this self-righteous man to the temple, is presented to our view under very different circumstances. He says little, but appears to feel much.

His eyes seem to have been turned within. He examined his heart. He was sensible of its impurity, and of his own ill desert. He appears to have been quite sensible of the presence, the perfection, and purity of God. Deeply convicted of the odious nature of sin, and that his own sins deserved the righteous reprobation of his Maker ; weighed down with a consciousness of his guilt, he did not dare so much as to lift his eyes towards heaven, but casting them down upon the earth, as one who felt that his guilt was clear, and his sentence just, with blushing face, and aching heart, he “ *smote upon his breast, saying,—God be merciful to me a sinner.* ”

On what has now been said, we will offer a few remarks.

1. Whenever men see their true character, they see that they are sinners. We are led to believe, that the publican was not deceived in the conviction he had, that he was a sinner, and in the petition that he offered up for mercy, from the declaration of our Saviour, “ *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.* ” For what was he justified ? Not surely, for his confessing himself to be what he was not. Not for his imploring mercy, when, if he was not a sinner in fact, as he felt himself to be, he was not a proper object of mercy. He felt what was real in his case. He had a just view of his true character. He felt himself to be guilty, and thence, became most profoundly sensible of his ruin. His views of himself, were essentially different from those which the Pharisee had of *himself*. The confident, self-boasting spirit of the Pharisee, resulted doubt-



less, from the complacency with which he viewed his own character. Not knowing his own heart, and profoundly ignorant of the odious nature of sin, and of the glorious holiness and perfect purity of God, he was prepared to think himself a good man ; and thence approaches his Maker, both with a manner, and in the use of language, that very illy becomes a poor polluted worm, who is dependent for the smallest blessing of his life, and whose eternal hopes are suspended, exclusively, upon rich and sovereign mercy.

Under the preaching of Peter, thousands were brought both to see, and acknowledge, *that* of themselves, which they had never seen, nor felt disposed to acknowledge, before. Deeply convicted of their guilt ; feeling that they were sinners, they cried with the most trembling solicitude, “ *Men and brethren, what shall we do* ”—They saw and felt their sinfulness, with such clearness and pungency, as brought them almost instantly to the borders of despair. They cried out, like men, upon the point of being bereft of all their comforts and hopes, as if they felt that all was lost—“ *What must we do ?* ”

Innumerable multitudes, since the days of Peter, have been brought to the same view of their condition ; and have expressed their utter astonishment, that they had been so long in a state of ignorance and insensibility to their true character.

Nothing is more difficult, than to convince men that they are sinners. They are ready, indeed, to acknowledge themselves such, measurably, and to a certain extent. Doubtless

the Pharisee, felt himself to be in some particulars, what he should not be. But his iniquities appeared small, and his offences few, and very pardonable. Paul felt himself almost perfect, at the very time that his heart was the seat of total corruption. When he was brought to see his true character, he saw that there was not a particle of moral goodness in him. And he was very sincere too, in the self-complacent views which he had of his heart, while he was a Pharisee. He declares this after he had become a good man. "*I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*" Yet Saul, the boasting Pharisee, when the Holy Ghost brought genuine conviction to his conscience, unequivocally condemned himself, both for the conduct of his life, and his blindness with regard to the true character of his heart. "*I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*" He is now ready to call himself the chief of sinners. And this, notwithstanding he had been as punctilious an observer of the externals of religion, as any man that lived in his day. He became so deeply convinced of his guilt, that he gave up all for lost, so far as regarded his ability to effect deliverance for himself.

Every age of the christian church has furnished a cloud of witnesses, whose experience accords with that of the great apostle to the Gentiles. Nor need we confine ourselves to the experience of the people of God, to prove, that when men see their true character, they see that they are sinners. Thousands, who have resisted conviction all their days, and

have laboured to persuade themselves, that all that the people of God have professed to feel on the subject of their depravity, has been nothing but enthusiasm and delusion, when brought to the bed of death, and called to look into eternity, as a world of wonders just ready to open upon them, have nevertheless, suddenly been awakened to a conviction of their unprepared state, and have groaned away their life, under an agonizing sense of the utter sinfulness of their hearts, and a fearful apprehension of future wo.

A vague and unfeeling acknowledgment, that we are sinners, is not sufficient for us, my friends. We never shall see our true character, as God sees it, until we come to such a sense of our vileness and guilt, as to see that there is nothing good in our hearts towards God ; nothing upon which his holy eye can look with complacency ; nothing that can engage the affection of his heart.

It is a vain effort we are making, to cover our sins from the sight of our own eyes. We may indeed be successful, through the whole night of time ; but how dreadful will our horror be, when, in the light of eternity, we shall see our true character, and learn, that we are altogether guilty in the sight of a holy God.

I have no doubt, that multitudes are under the necessity of warring it with their consciences, all their life long, to keep their eyes closed to a discovery of their true character ; and that their way to the pit of despair, is every step of it battle ground ; and alas, how dreadful will the end be, when they shall find that they have shed their own life's blood for eternity.

We remark—

2. That when men become convinced that they are sinners, they will see their need of mercy. The convicted publican felt this—His eye was opened upon his true character. The effect of it was, to inspire him at the same time, with a very solemn sense of the majesty, and purity of God, and of his own guilty and helpless condition.

His object, doubtless, in going up to the temple, was to seek relief from the agony of conviction which he felt. We may easily imagine his distress to be growing upon him, and a sense of his vileness to weigh down his spirit, at every step he takes towards the holy place, where God had vouchsafed to lend a listening ear to the supplications of his people. But he does not feel, that he has any right to expect divine favour. He is ready to acknowledge, that he has justly forfeited all claim, even to a gracious hearing. So exceedingly is his heart oppressed with a sense of his vileness, that he stands afar off, in some obscure part of the temple, and here, under the deepest agitation of feeling, like one who had received the sentence of condemnation, and who felt it just, with his eye fixed upon the earth, he smites upon his breast, and cries for mercy. But why did he cry for mercy? For the same reason that you will my friends, when God shall let light in upon your soul, and set conviction home upon you. He saw that he was undone. All hope of deliverance from any other source, than that of infinite mercy, had fled. His sense of guilt pressed him down. He felt himself sinking, fast sinking to the place of woe, from which there was, in *his* view, no re-

covery. He had no defence to set up—Self condemned, he had nothing to say in extenuation of his guilt. All his vain excuses, with which in former periods of his life he had satisfied himself, were taken from him, and he was left a helpless, guilty dependent on sovereign mercy. He now saw his need of that which before he had not thought worthy his notice. When God had warned him, he had disregarded. When God addressed him as a condemned criminal, and had invited him to lay hold on his outstretched arm, that he might escape the wrath to come, he had treated with contempt the condescensions of mercy. He did, what I am constrained to say, every one of my poor impenitent hearers is doing now. He made his heart stout against God, and treated the mercy of his Maker with proud, and haughty indifference. But he was brought to discover and feel his guilt, and danger. Under the most solemn sense of his hell desert, he is brought to see his need of the mercy he had before contemned, and his dependence on that almighty arm, which he had hitherto disregarded. God grant, that those who now hear me, may have their eyes open, to discover their need of mercy, before it shall be for ever too late.

My dear friends, how do you expect to be saved, if you are ever saved? Is not God your only helper? Is there any arm besides his, that can reach your case? If brought by, and by, into his presence, what think you will be your feelings? You know now, what you think, and how you speak and feel about the Bible, and the professed friends of Jesus Christ. You now, doubtless, some of you, are ready to condemn the

children of God, and speak hard things of them, and feel bitter things towards them. Suppose there are some who profess Christ, and yet do not act in accordance with what the Scriptures enjoin, and we even acknowledge them hypocrites ; you will not say, that it is religion that makes them so. Religion, it will be allowed on all hands, makes some men good. It makes them men of prayer, of excellent example, and faithful in discharging their duties, in all the departments of social, and civil life. Does God look upon such with pleasure ? Can he then view characters of an opposite description with equal pleasure think you ? And do you now seriously believe, that if you ever get to heaven, you will think and talk about religion as you now do ? and feel towards its friends, as you now sometimes feel ? If you think you shall not : If you think the heavenly temper and spirit will differ, very essentially, from your present feelings, with regard to the particulars I have just named, may I tenderly ask—Can the temper and feelings you now indulge, and the course you now pursue, be a proper preparative for heaven ? Can you believe that God loves such a temper and feelings, and such a course now ? If you cannot, and yet feel that all your hopes rest on him, and that without him you cannot expect to be saved.—Is it possible that you are now in the way of salvation, while you neglect the performance of known duty, and take pleasure in those things, which your own ingenuousness forces you to acknowledge cannot be pleasing to God ? Those of all men on earth, do in fact lie at mercy's door, who expect to go to heaven, and yet do nothing to cultivate



the temper of heaven, nor any thing in obedience to the will of heaven's King.

How delusive, and vain, as well as indefinite, unsettled and unsatisfying your hope of heaven ! How low too, your ideas of its enjoyments ! You think there will be a sort of refined happiness there, adapted to our animal natures ; and by what you are capable of enjoying in this respect in this world, you form a notion of what will constitute the felicity of the upper world.

But alas, my friends, you will never know what heaven is, until you are brought to feel the bitterness of soul, which an awakened consciousness of guilt produces ; nor will you ever be brought duly to appreciate the infinite kindness and compassion of God, until, under a sense of your lost and perishing condition as sinners, ready, in prospect of the scenes of the future world, to sink into despair, you feel your need of the sovereign, and gracious interposition of the infinitely blessed God and Saviour.

We remark—

3. When sinners are brought to see that they must perish without the help of God, they will cry to him for help. Thus did the publican. His heart went out after God. His only plea was mercy. He had nothing in himself to offer as a reason that God should show mercy. He threw himself unreservedly into God's hands. Every other refuge and resource failed him. He felt that he had sinned against heaven. He was influenced by the same spirit that actuated the prodigal, when he said—*“ Father I have sinned against heaven and in*

*thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as thine hired servant."*

Every true penitent is ready to leave it with God to dispose of him. He has nothing to ask, as a matter of merit.

The cry of the publican teaches us that he had abandoned all his self-confidence ; that he had fully condemned himself, and justified God.

The experience of penitent sinners in every age, compares with the feelings expressed by the publican. And even advanced Christians can testify, that they are always ready to adopt his language, when they look at their own hearts, and at their personal deserts ; and I doubt not, that very many, who have made extensive progress in the divine life, have been constrained often to cry, with more intenseness and ardour, and with deeper conviction of their guilt, than they felt, when first they were brought to see their true character—  
*" God be merciful to us sinners."*

David, under a very deep sense of his guilt and ill desert, pleads with his Maker—*" Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness ; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."*

I do not know that it is possible for a child of God, to be brought into a more tender, and humble frame of mind, than that which arises from a sight and sense of his sinfulness, and of his entire dependence on divine mercy. Is he sometimes elevated with the joy of hope ? He cannot, if he remembers the deceitfulness of the heart, but rejoice with trembling. He hardly dares indulge the thought, that so guilty a creature

as he is, can experience the joy of the spirit of adoption : But when, under an afflicting consciousness of his guilt and ill desert, he can throw himself on the mercy of his God and Judge, and lie at the feet of gracious sovereignty, he is less fearful of being deceived. He has a more deep, and full sense, of his being, where he ought to be ; and from this spot, he can look with a mild eye, and contemplate with a tender, melting feeling of soul, the infinite condescensions of divine compassion and forbearance, and lie in quiet, at the feet of sovereign, adorable mercy. At the feet of this mercy, must every sinner be brought voluntarily to cast himself, if he would ever indulge the hope of pardon. But no sinner will do this, until he is brought to feel, that his ruin is unavoidable without it. Nor has any sinner under such a state of feeling, ever cast himself in vain upon the mercy of his Maker. Many have plead with God, that he would show them mercy, when they have been alarmed at the consequences of sin, when they have been influenced by the fear of endless misery : But there is a difference between being moved, from a *sense of sin*, and of a *just desert* of punishment, and a dread apprehension of *suffering* only, to cry for mercy. The worst of beings may cry for mercy, for the sake of being relieved from torment. The dread of pain, is a feeling, deeply rooted in the selfishness of our natures. But where the cry for mercy, arises from a sense of ill desert, by reason of a deep conviction of sin, it is not the prospect of *suffering* that occasions distress of mind ; it is the consciousness of *guilt*, as justly exposing to suffering.

The truly humbled and genuine penitent comes as his own accuser, as the witness against himself, pronounces his own sentence of condemnation, and then, under the overwhelming impression that nothing but mercy can reach his case, awaits the decision of his Judge.

Have *you* ever done so, my impenitent friends ? O, will you ever do so ? Where must you find your portion in eternity if you do not ? I remember, that one did cry from the midst of tormenting flame in the eternal world—“ *Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue.*” Here was a cry for mercy that was not heard. It was the unavailing cry of a sinner in despair. And what did he ask ? Not that his soul might be delivered from the place of his suffering. To this, his agony would have driven him, if in his view, there had been the least prospect of success. He who was in the torments of another world felt that there was no hope of deliverance ; but he did hope that a drop of cold water might have been imparted. In this request, however, a request that seems to address itself most powerfully, to every feeling of sympathy and benevolence, he was not heard. He complains of his sufferings, but not of his sins. He feels his pain, but says nothing of his guilt.

Perhaps some who hear me, have raised an unavailing cry to God, under a state of feeling, very similar to that of the rich man. You have been reduced to a bed of sickness. Death has looked you in the face. A dread eternity has appeared to be just opening upon you. You expected shortly

Go, and appear before your Judge. You felt yourselves unprepared. You raised your cry for mercy. You entreated that your life might be spared you, and promised—I will not say what—You know, and God knows. In a little while death will come again, and not only look upon you, but will fasten, also, his arrow, in your heart. You will then look again to God. You will raise again your cry for mercy. Will you promise again? Will you dare think that God will believe you? The mercy you seek after, consists in being saved from suffering, not from sin. Such cries for mercy, God cannot hear. He hates sin with a perfect hatred, and he will only regard those, who, like the publican, feel that they are sinners, that they deserve to die, and are ready to throw themselves into the hands of sovereign, adorable mercy. To this mercy, in the name of the God of love, would I most tenderly commend your souls.





## SERMON XIII.

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*"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him ; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."*

ISAIAH, iii. 10, 11.

THE inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah at the time this prophecy was delivered, were exceedingly corrupt. They had so far departed from God, that he had given them up to become a prey to their enemies. The immediate precursors to the ruin threatened, are mentioned in the preceding context.

*"For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay, and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient. The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them." "Wo unto their soul ! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves."*

The ruin here threatened was accomplished by the Chaldeans, and is very pathetically described by Jeremiah in his lamentations.

But in this time of his wrath, God did not forget his people, those who sighed for the abominations done in the land ; and he hence instructs the prophet to speak comfortably to them, as in the language of the text—“ *Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.*”

The dispensations of divine providence towards the nations of the earth, are of a retributive character ; and although the good, may sometimes suffer during a period of general national calamity, yet, may they expect, according to the promise of God, that he will sanctify their affliction to them, so that they shall see, and acknowledge his hand of mercy, and find in all his dealings towards them, increasing ground of confidence, in his holy and wise administration.

But the regard which God exercises towards the righteous, and his abhorrence of the wicked, will be in a very striking and affecting manner displayed, on the great day of final retribution, when every individual of the human family, shall appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that he may “ *receive according to the deeds done in the body,*” “ *whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil.*” Then, both the blessing, and the wo pronounced in the text, shall be experienced respectively, by the persons on whom they are pronounced.

As there is a difference in their *character*, so will there be a difference in their *end*, between the *righteous*, and the *wicked*.

It is my design at this time to call your attention—

TO THE DIFFERENCE THERE IS, BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS, AND THE WICKED IN THEIR CHARACTER, AND THEIR END.

### I. THEIR CHARACTER.

1. The character of the righteous, as exhibited in the Scriptures.

They are represented as loving God, and therefore departing from evil. The tender regard which the righteous feel towards God, excites them to watchfulness and prayer ; and they are afraid of offending their Maker. They are God's special, and chosen friends. They are called holy, saints, sanctified ones, God's people, God's beloved, his elect, his jewels, his sons, and his daughters. They are spoken of as having been purified, and sanctified, by the Spirit of God. They have an understanding in divine things. They have peculiar views of God's holy character, and peculiar feelings towards him. They have some genuine gratitude, for what they receive at the hand of their heavenly King. They love what he loves, and hate what he hates. They find their pleasure, in subordinating their will, to the will of God ; and desire in all things, to be disposed of according to his pleasure.

2. The character of the wicked.

It is different in every one of the particulars just named, from the character of the righteous. The wicked hate God, and take

pleasure in iniquity. Their hatred towards his holy character leads them to manifest their opposition, by disregarding his law, and expressing contempt for his authority. They are not afraid of offending God. They make light of sin ; and trifle with the solemn sanctions of God's word. They both deny, and hate, the distinction which the Bible very clearly makes, between the righteous, and the wicked, between saints, and sinners. They are called unholy, unclean, earthly, sensual, devilish, men of reprobate minds, without understanding, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, haters of good things, lovers of themselves, more than lovers of God. They are said to take pleasure in unrighteousness, to hate their neighbours, who are more righteous than they. They hate what God loves, and love what God hates. They do not desire to retain a knowledge of God in their minds. Their opposition, to his holy, and excellent character, and government, is such, that they wish in their heart, there were no God. They have no knowledge of the beauty and excellency of holiness ; and there are no views of God that please them, but those which make him altogether such an one as themselves.

We may notice then, two specifick and prominent points of difference, between the righteous, and the wicked ; and these constitute the ground of that difference, which marks the feelings of their hearts, and the conduct of their lives ; and also of the difference in the treatment which God will extend to them.

1. The righteous have been born again. The wicked have not.

When I say that the righteous have been born again, I mean, that they have been renewed, and sanctified, by the power of the Holy Ghost. The consequence of this renewal is, that they are different in the feelings of their hearts, from what they were before. They are changed and altered persons. They are led by a different spirit, even the Spirit of God. Their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. He dwells in them, influences them, and purifies them, even as God is pure. They are partakers of the divine nature. They are made spiritually alive to God. They are new creatures. They have been created anew in Christ Jesus, by the power of the Eternal Spirit.

But the *wicked* have never experienced this change. They are still, in that unsanctified, and impure state, in which they were born. Before regeneration, the righteous were as the wicked now are. They too, were dead in trespasses and sins ; but they have been washed, they have been sanctified, they have been purified, by the blood of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. The wicked differ from them, in that they are still in their natural sinful state. Their hearts are totally selfish, and corrupt. They have no right feelings towards God, nor any just and true views of his holy and excellent character. Every sentiment, and feeling of their soul, is hostility to God, and his truth. They are not led by the Spirit of God. They have never experienced the motions of the Spirit. They are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, without God, and without hope in the world.

We notice a specifick difference between the righteous and the wicked—

2. In that the former have some holiness, and that the latter have none.

Before regeneration, all are alike destitute of holiness ; although all may not be equally great sinners. There are doubtless, among the impenitent, those who are more grossly wicked and vile than others ; but there are none of the impenitent, who have any holiness. There is nothing, in the heart of a single unrenewed sinner, that God can look upon with complacency. But those who have been born again, have some holiness, something that is like God, and that God can love, and approve.

There is doubtless, a great deal of imperfection and sin in the best of God's people. In the present life the saints are sanctified but in part ; but they are in some respects such, as to please God. He sees something good and lovely in them. They bear the image of the Lord Jesus. They are in many respects like their risen Saviour. Because they have some holiness, God loves them. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, they have been renewed, and by faith united to the Redeemer ; and as God loves the Son, so he loves also those who belong to the Son ; as he loves HIM that hath *begotten*, so he loves also *those that are begotten*.

The righteous, having been made partakers of the divine nature, by regeneration, bear a resemblance to God. This resemblance God loves. So far as they resemble God, they differ from sinners, who bear no resemblance to God. They



are utterly destitute of every moral excellency. All their feelings and exercises are wholly, and only sinful ; and thence offensive to God. They never have a holy desire. They never perform a single action, from motives which God can approve. All their desires and feelings are totally selfish. The righteous have some benevolent feelings. The wicked have none. The righteous do some things from a pure regard to the glory of God. The wicked do none. The righteous are sometimes disinterested. The wicked never are. The righteous submit to God. The wicked never do ; but always desire to subordinate the glory of God, to their own selfish, and corrupt views, and feelings. Because, therefore, there is something good in the righteous, God loves them. Because there is nothing good in the wicked, but every one of their affections are selfish and corrupt, God hates them.

The Holy Spirit has employed peculiar imagery, and forms of expression to distinguish the righteous from the wicked. The former he calls, the children of the day, and of light ; the latter, the children of the night, and of darkness. The former he calls, the children of God, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty ; the latter, the children of the devil, the children of the wicked one. The former he calls, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ ; the latter, heirs of perdition, vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction.

It might be expected, that persons, differing so widely in their character, should differ also, widely in their end.

Hence we briefly contemplate—

## II. THE END OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED.

Whilst throughout the Scripture, we see the *character* of the righteous, and the *character* of the wicked, exhibited in the light of contrast, so in the same manner, is their *end* brought into view. It shall be well with the righteous, when the end of all things shall have come ; and then too, for the first time, shall the wicked know, to the full extent, the nature of that wo, which the lips of the holy God have pronounced against them. “ *Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart.*” “ *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*” Christ has gone to prepare mansions for his friends ; and when he shall come to judge the world, he will take them to dwell with him in the mansions which he shall have prepared. The end of the righteous is eternal life. When they die, they shall be with Christ, and behold his glory, and participate in all the blessedness of the heavenly world. In the morning of the resurrection they shall “ *awake to everlasting life.*” God will smile upon them in eternal day ; and they shall be for ever “ *filled with*” his “ *fulness.*” But not so the end of the wicked. Their light shall be turned into darkness ; and their joy, into sorrow and heaviness of heart. “ *Their end is destruction.*” They are kept unto “ *the day of the perdition of ungodly men.*” Reserved of God, “ *unto the day of judgement to be punished.*” They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. They shall awake “ *to shame and everlasting contempt.*” They shall “ *come forth unto the resurrection of damnation.*”

## REMARKS.

1. We learn, that there is, in the view of God, an essential difference between the righteous, and the wicked. However unwilling men may be, to acknowledge this difference to exist, yet God declares that it does exist. His decision is supported too, by that consciousness of guilt, which sinners feel ; and by their fears, and disquietudes, when, under any circumstances in providence, they are forced to look at their character, and their condition of responsibility, and to anticipate their future destiny.

Nor is it an evidence, for the truth of that distinction, which the Spirit of God has made, between the righteous, and the wicked, that is to be lightly passed by, that the wicked hate, and oppose, all those truths of the Bible, which in any measure involve this distinction. They love to talk of heaven and happiness, and of the goodness and mercy of God. Their selfish desire for safety and comfort, renders such subjects of conversation pleasing to them. But not a truth is pleasing, that brings into view, the necessity of a *preparation* for heaven, nor that speaks of the retributions of eternity. They do not love to be told, that it is necessary, that God should make a difference between the righteous and the wicked, in his *treatment* of them, to support the moral rectitude of his character. Men of reprobate minds, and reprobate lives, love to speak of the *goodness* of God ; and of the kindness, and tenderness of his heart ; but they never stop to inquire, whether the amiableness and purity of his character can be sustained, and whether he would really be a good being, if he should

treat all men alike, without regard to character ? Hence, we see persons of this description, opposing the doctrine of regeneration. It necessarily involves, the doctrine of depravity ; it implies that men, without this change, are unfit for heaven, and as a necessary consequence, are exposed to the wrath, with which God threatens the finally impenitent.

Now, from the character drawn of the wicked, by the unerring Spirit of God, we might easily infer, that they would feel, towards all those great truths that exhibit their character, and pour light upon the subject of their future destiny, just as we see that they do feel. What the Saviour said to the Jews is true of every impenitent sinner, "*Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*"

But, whatever may be the views and feelings of sinners on the subject, God has declared, that there is a very great, and essential difference, between the righteous, and the wicked ; and that both the righteous, and the wicked shall one day, discern this difference.

Let us labour to persuade ourselves, my dear friends, that the views of God, with regard to our character and destiny, are more agreeable to the truth of the case, than our own are. The reluctance with which we believe, what God has said, and our opposition of heart to his truth, should be an alarming evidence to us, that God knows our hearts, better than we know them ; and also, that he has exhibited our true character, since he has told us, that in our unsanctified heart, we should feel, and act, towards the truth, precisely as we do. In our opposition to the truth, we have evidence to the truth

itself; and God has a witness with which to confront us, in the day of final trial, that will awaken the deepest remorse, and the keenest anguish in our bosom.

We cannot, my friends, without destroying the moral excellency of the Divine character, and denying the Bible, avoid the admission of the truths which have now been exhibited. God declares that there is a difference between the characters of men in this world, and that on this difference will be founded, the difference of treatment, which he will extend to them in eternity. In the eye of God this difference must be real, essential, and exceedingly great, as the most solemn consequences for eternity are based upon it.

It is on this difference of character, that is founded the great doctrine of future retribution. This difference, God will bring into view, as the righteous moral governour, when he shall judge the world. Must it not then, since the infinite joys, or endless sorrows of the future world, are to be determined by it, be, in the eye of God, a great, essential, and solemn distinction? And how, my friends, ought you, and I to feel about it? It is a distinction that relates to us personally; and that involves our dearest interests for eternity. Shall we not look at it? Shall we not take the side of God? And now while there is hope, turn to him, with all our heart, and with all our soul?

2. If, as we have seen, this difference between the righteous and the wicked is real, and essential, in the eye of God, then, as God must uniformly, be the friend of holiness, and the enemy to sin, he must *treat* the righteous and the wicked, differently, in the state of retribution.



There are many reasons to assign, that are very obvious, to justify the divine procedure towards the righteous and the wicked, in this world, in that, in his treatment of them here, we do not see this difference recognized ; but none of these reasons would justify a similar treatment of them, when they shall have closed their probation, and shall have entered upon the state of retribution.—That, in the eternal world, he may exhibit and support, the purity of his nature, and the moral rectitude of his government, God will treat all his creatures according to their true character ; and thence we are taught, by the Eternal Spirit, with respect to the treatment which men will receive at the hand of God, at that interesting period, when he shall judge the world, that “ *he that is righteous shall be righteous still, and he that is holy, shall be holy still, and he that is unjust, shall be unjust still, and he that is filthy, shall be filthy still.* ”

With what solemn force are we thence brought to notice—

3. The great and awful changes, and reverses, that will take place in eternity. Many, who have been honoured here, will there be covered with shame, and everlasting contempt. How little will this world look then, to those who fix their hearts upon it now. How suddenly, and for ever, will a period be put, to all the joys and pleasures of this life. Every feeling, and desire, that does not fix, and centre on God, will then be disappointed, and frustrated. Every earthly hope shall perish. All the methods of present gratification to sinners, shall cease to exist. The festivities and amusements of time, are infinitely too impure, to engage a thought, or awaken



an emotion, in the other world. What will the sons and daughters of gayety, and mirth, and dissipation, and folly do, when they shall stand before God ? Who ever thought of spreading the festive board in hell ? or of drawing out, for the sake of amusement, the gaming table in heaven ? What will become of those, who shaped their religion in this world, so as to gratify a corrupt taste, when they shall find, that the joy of heaven consists, in holy love to God, and that amid the agonies of the pit, no kind and soothing sympathies will ever be exercised, nor will there be felt, for the most transient moment, the smallest amount of pleasure, and of ease ? Whilst the righteous, many of whom are now in poverty, and are suffering under oppression, shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father, as the stars for ever and ever ; the wicked, who live at ease, who care nothing for Christ, nor his cause, who sport themselves with their own deceivings, shall lie down in sorrow, and weep, and wail, during the long eternity of their wretchedness, under the wrath of the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb.

4. From what has been said, it appears, that in the eye of God, there can be but two descriptions of characters, now composing this audience. There are indeed diversities of talents, endowments, and circumstances, equal, almost, to the number of individuals who hear me. But as it regards their moral character, they can be divided into two classes only. Every one is either a saint, or a sinner ; and a friend of Jesus Christ, or an enemy ; an heir of glory, or a son of perdition.

Some who now number with God's enemies, may yet become his friends : But in their present character, they are either with Christ, or against him ; and should we all now be summoned to appear before the throne of judgement, in our present character, and with our present views, and feelings, our destiny in eternity, would be with that class, with which, in the judgement of God, we are now connected.

Hence we would observe—

5. That every one, who will honestly apply himself to the work, may determine, to which class he belongs.

There is a great, and wide difference, as we have seen, between the righteous and the wicked. This difference is not a matter of human device. God himself has drawn the great outlines of the human character, as it is by nature, unchanged, and uninfluenced by the sanctifying operations of his Spirit. He has brought into view, also, all those features of the new man, by which he is distinguished, from the impenitent and unbelieving. By applying the characteristick description, that God has given, of the righteous, and the wicked, it can in general, be no difficult matter for us to decide, whether we are of the number of his friends, or his enemies. Where do you find your pleasure, my dear friends ? In this world ? In its pastimes ? its riches ? its honours ? and its gratifications ? or in God ? in holy reverence for his name and authority ? in prayer ? in the duties of religion ? and in the growing hope of immortal life and glory ? O make the inquiry, and decide now, as under the eye of God.

Finally, You are urged to this now, that if you shall discover on the one hand, that you are without hope, and that a fearful doom awaits you, if you remain as you now are, you may betimes, betake yourselves to the refuge provided in the gospel : And on the other hand, if you shall come to the delightful conclusion, that your heart is reconciled to God ; moved by the consolations of your hope, and in the prospect of the exceeding weight of glory that is in reserve for you, you may double your diligence, in the cause of your Lord and Master, and influenced by a holy and tender solicitude for the salvation of your friends around you, may invite them to the Lord Jesus Christ, that they too may be saved.

If what God has said, respecting the character and end of the righteous, and the wicked, be true, what a world lies before us ? To what an end are we all pressing our way ? In closing my interview, with my dying auditors, at this time, I feel myself impelled, by my oath of fidelity, to your God and mine, to address to you, the solemn language of the text, that you may be encouraged, or warned, according to your respective characters, as you all know, they must appear before God. O righteous man, it shall be well with you, for you shall eat of the fruit of your doings. O wicked man, it shall be ill with you, for the reward of your hands shall be given you.



## SERMON XIV.

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*"We will hear thee again of this matter."*

ACTS, xvii, 32.

It is very pleasing to observe, by what peculiar, and often times, unexpected means, God, in his wise and holy providence, made way for the spread of the gospel, in the primitive ages of Christianity.

Paul had been preaching at Thessalonica for a time, when the wicked Jews began to raise a persecution against him, and so far succeeded, that it was thought expedient for him to depart. Accordingly he went to Berea, a neighbouring city. Here he was kindly received, and found in the inhabitants, a more inquiring and teachable spirit. Many persons of reputation, and influence, were brought to embrace the truth ; and a wide door for usefulness seemed to be opening.

But the restless spirit of persecution, and of hatred to the truth, that had driven him from Thessalonica, now drove him also, from Berea. He was brought by some Christian friends, to Athens, the most renowned city of antiquity, the seat of science, the theatre of eloquence, and the senate of the world.

Paul was the very man, of all the disciples of Christ, to preach in such a place, and to a people, boasting themselves of their wisdom, fond of change, and pursuing with enthusiastick ardour, every new speculation in philosophy.

In consequence of reasoning with the Jews in their synagogues, and conversing with those that he met in the markets, he was shortly brought under the notice and observation, of the Epicurian and Stoical philosophers. The doctrines which he taught, were so widely different from theirs, and were so eminently calculated to expose the folly of idolatry, that they felt disposed to have an exhibition of his sentiments before the people. For this purpose, they brought him to Areopagus, a place, where they held publick assemblies, that they might know, what new doctrine it was, that he taught.

Standing in the midst of Mars-hill, surrounded with the pride, and learning of Athens, he opens upon them with an address, well befitting the pupil of Gamaliel, and heaven's chosen apostle to the Gentiles. He adapts his introductory remarks, to the circumstances, and characters of his hearers ; and having, by a most happy allusion to their own devotion, directed their attention to the one only living, and true God, and proved that their idolatry was degrading to their rational natures, he preaches to them repentance, the resurrection from the dead, and a final judgement.

Having opened upon his speculating audience, with these three important articles of the Christian faith, he had reached forbidden ground. His philosophical auditors, were opposed to his doctrines.



The Epicurians denied a state of future rewards and punishments ; thought the gods were very much like themselves, contented with the felicities of their own superiour world ,and too indolent, to take any special concern, in the affairs of the inhabitants of this. The Stoicks, on the other hand, believed the gods bound by unchanging fate. They pretended not only to govern, but even, almost to extinguish the human passions. They were self conceited boasters ; proud of their virtues, and felt themselves able to attain to an excellency and perfection of character, that should render them superiour not only to the gods, but also to that eternal fate, which controlled the gods themselves. They did not deny the doctrine of a future state, but their views on this subject were exceedingly dark and unsettled.

The text exhibits the effect, that Paul's doctrine had on his curious, self-wise, speculating hearers. "*And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter.*"

The Epicurians treated the subject, with contemptuous levity and ridicule ; but the Stoicks, in accordance with the gravity of their philosophy, with a show of civility, excused themselves from any farther attention for the present, by saying, that they would hear him again. Thus they interrupted the apostle in the course of his discussion, and refused to listen to the evidence, which doubtless he was prepared to exhibit, in support of those great and important truths of the gospel, which he had propounded.

The sentiment, to which I shall invite your attention at this time, as founded on the text, and its connexions, is the following—

THE CONDUCT OF MEN, IN REJECTING THE GOSPEL. WITHOUT EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE BY WHICH IT IS SUPPORTED, IS CRIMINAL, IRRATIONAL, AND DANGEROUS.

In illustrating, and confirming this sentiment, we shall show :

I. WHO THOSE ARE, THAT MAY BE SAID TO REJECT THE GOSPEL.

II. THAT THEIR CONDUCT IS CRIMINAL, IRRATIONAL, AND DANGEROUS.

I. I SHALL SHOW WHO THOSE ARE, THAT MAY BE SAID TO REJECT THE GOSPEL.

All men of profane and immoral lives, who never wait on God in his house, and live in a state of entire stupidity and indifference about their souls, reject the gospel. Such persons evidently live contrary to God in all things. Their habits and course of living are directly opposite to what the gospel requires. In the way which they are pursuing, they cannot expect the smallest benefit from the gospel. So far from it, that they are exposed to the wrath which it threatens against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. Those, who do not live, in some measure, as the gospel requires, can have no claim to be considered, as among the number of those, who accept of it.

But more particularly—

1. Those reject the gospel, who, though they profess to believe it, yet accommodate it to their own views, and do

not suffer it to controul their passions, or govern their conduct.

Men are very ready to suppose, that some allowance will be made in *their* case, for what they consider *peculiarity* of circumstances : And often, when they violate the letter, of what the gospel requires, they yet do not consider themselves very guilty, because they think their *intentions* were not bad, and that they were not influenced by any feelings of direct hostility to the gospel. Under this impression, they persuade themselves that the gospel will not condemn them for what they deem their unintentional violations of its requirements, and so, they comfort themselves with the persuasion, that their case is hopeful.

Men, who hold these loose, and vague views of the gospel, not unfrequently, indulge themselves in exceedingly unwarrantable practices, while at the same time, they would be very unwilling to be ranked with those, who reject the gospel. The truth is, they have adopted such sentiments about the gospel, as make it a system of little, or no self-denial ; a system, that looks upon their transgressions, rather as infirmities, than crimes. They do not realize, that the gospel addresses itself, altogether, to the heart. That it requires, that men should love God supremely ; and that they should evidence their love, by the obedience of their lives, and their entire submission, in all things, to his will.

2. Those reject the gospel, who, forgetting that it is a system of grace, think to secure heaven, by a correct moral deportment. That temper of heart which the gospel re-

quires will always exhibit itself, by a correct moral deportment ; and without a holy life, no one can, consistently, indulge the hope, that his heart has been renewed. But correctness and propriety of external conduct is not conclusive evidence, that the heart is right with God. Some men, who have openly rejected divine revelation, and have been simple Deists, have lived very moral lives. We can hardly suppose, however, that those will be saved, through Jesus Christ, who reject him publickly, and denounce him as an impostor. But those, who build their hope of acceptance with God, on their own good works, do virtually reject the Saviour, by making their good works, and not his atoning sacrifice, the ground of their hope of heaven.

The seat of religion in man, as we have just observed, is in the heart. The *exhibition* of it, is in the life. The whole of religion consists in the affections. When the affections centre in God, when the heart is right with him, the actions, directed by right affections, will also be right. But it is easy to perceive, that there may be actions that are right, so far as the *form* is concerned, where the heart is totally opposed to the gospel. Very wicked men, often do a great many right actions, in form ; but, we could hardly say, that they were, therefore, men of religion. The man, then, who expects to obtain the approbation of heaven, on account of his correct external deportment, whilst his heart is not fixed on Jesus Christ, who does not feel, that all his morality will avail nothing, but through the gracious intercession of the Saviour, rejects God's method of pardon, and must expect to be found among the

enemies of the Cross, on the last day. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, settles the question, with regard to the hope of the mere moralist, where he makes the whole of religion consist in love, or universal and impartial benevolence. “*Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels—And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge—And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains—And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor—And though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*”

3. Those reject the gospel, who, though they are strictly moral, and yet do not expect through their morality to merit heaven, but fully believe, in speculation, in the gospel method of salvation, do nevertheless, withhold their hearts from God.

This class of men is very numerous where the gospel is clearly exhibited. They know their duty. They feel, often, the most severe compunctions of conscience. They have many and serious struggles with their own hearts ; but yet will not submit. Their pride of talent and character, their desire for mingling with the world, their love of influence, their attachment to wealth, all combine to resist the convictions of conscience, and the sober judgement of their understanding. They have great intellectual light. They can perceive, intellectually, a fitness, and beauty, and harmony, in the character and government of God. They can feel the force of motives. They will acknowledge their obligations ; they confess their guilt, in neglecting Christ ; but after all, their *hearts* will not bow, to the self-denying and humble doc-

trines of the Cross. It costs them a great deal of trouble to reject Christ, and his gospel. They do, however, reject him. It matters not, how many struggles they have to make ; nor by how many promises of amendment, in some not far future day, they set aside the claims of God upon their present obedience and love. These instead of lessening, do but aggravate their guilt, and will be the means of embittering to them, their future cup of wo. The more light and conviction a man successfully struggles against, in rejecting the gospel, the more complete is the triumph of sin, and the more aggravated is his guilt.

4. Those do most evidently reject the gospel, who will not give themselves the trouble to examine at all, but caring for none of these things, treat it with contempt, and ridicule.

Men of serious and thinking minds, who have a conviction that they have souls, and must die ; that solemn scenes await them in future time ; and who feel, that they are on the way to the judgement, are not found among this number.

In the levity and indifference, with which those of whom we now speak, treat the gospel, they resemble the followers of Epicurus ; but they are not like them, in the study and examination of any definite and settled principles of philosophy. They seldom trouble themselves at all, to look after truth of any kind, but seem to take delight, only, in treating all serious and important truth, with utter indifference. They do not even labour to find evidence against, what they superciliously despise ; and were they called on for the reasons of their conduct, they would be unable to exhibit a solitary one.



They decry the gospel, because they hate it ; and believe it, all fiction, because they wish to have it so.

They dare not put to hazard their reputation, by thus treating the evidence that supports important facts, in the history of nations, that have been swept from the world's theatre, by the tide of time. No.—With respect to these, they have no motives for a denial. They hold no relation to their character and condition of responsibility. There is connected with them no law, that developes the grand principles of moral conduct, and enforces them by a penalty, fixed and sanctioned by the wisdom of the Eternal ; no obstructions are thrown in their way to sinful indulgence ; no day of reckoning is foretold, the solemn period, when “ *every work shall be brought into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* ” They have not the corruptions, and prejudices, and passions of their own wicked hearts ; nor the influence of the pride of a world of rebellion and revolt, to lead them to deny that Cæsar fought and Pompey bled : But these have, to sustain them, in the denial of the gospel, and to cover the blush of conscious shame, in rejecting, without investigation, the revealed will of God, and in treating with contempt, the well authenticated fact, that the blood of the Lord of glory, was shed on Calvary. They believe the history of the past, that is supported only by human testimony ; but the history of providence and of grace, that is supported by the broad seal of heaven, because it teaches them their dependence, and obligations, and demands their confidence and love, on pain of eternal death, they despise, and deride, and reject.

3. But there is still another class of men, who reject the gospel, who partake more of the character of the ancient Stoicks. They are industrious in the investigation of those subjects that interest them as politicians, as lovers of science, or as men of business. They are so absorbed in their respective objects of pursuit, that they find no leisure to investigate the evidence that supports the credibility of the gospel, nor to ascertain, how far it has claims upon the confidence and submission of their hearts. They have some general, but at the same time, very indefinite notions, about the gospel plan : But they are never ready to sit down, to a patient and laborious investigation, of its high and glorious developments ; that, by a discovery of its divine beauties, they might be persuaded to give it, its appropriate place in their hearts, and be brought to feel the force of its truths, and enjoy the richness of its consolations. They are ready, in general, to acknowledge, that revelation is important ; but that it presents no subject of thought of sufficient value and interest, to command their present, and immediate attention.

When the subject of religion is pressed home upon persons of this description, they are always prepared to set aside the claims of their Maker for the present, with a kind of implied promise, that they will attend to the subject at another time. Without any feeling sense of hostility to truth, they rather treat the subject courteously, and so give it a sort of pleasant discharge.

There are seasons, however, when they seem to think, that it is a subject, that lies below the worth of serious search ;

and when they are ready, in the pride of talent, and influence, and wealth, to suppose, that those, who are less happy, and fortunate than themselves, in these particulars, may find it for their comfort to go to religion, and make it their source of consolation, since they have little else to engage their attention, or to awaken them to effort.

Are these men to be set by the side of those who trifle with the religion of heaven, and ridicule the Cross of Christ? No, my friends. Those who trifle with religion, are usually men that think but little on any subject: But these men, are men of mind, and thought. What they hear, from time to time, commands their attention so far, that they come, on the whole, seriously to the conclusion, that the gospel is true; whilst at the same time, they do not feel the force, nor are they prepared to exhibit, the weight and power of the evidence that supports it. They have their *convictions* on the side of truth; but their *hearts* are all absorbed in the world. Their attention, for the moment, is arrested by the voice from heaven; but very courteously they say, we “will hear at another time about this matter.”

Having noticed in several particulars, who those are, that may be said to reject the gospel, we observe—

II. THAT THEIR CONDUCT IS CRIMINAL, IRRATIONAL, AND DANGEROUS.

*it is criminal.*

Aside from the fact, that the infinite amiableness and perfection of the Divine Being, deserves the supreme regard, and homage of all created intelligences, the obligations men are

under to love him, and obey his laws, may be argued from their relations to him, and their dependence on him for being, and happiness.

He is the Creator of men, and angels. It was owing to his good pleasure that they were brought into existence. Had he not been pleased to create them, they had never been. All their faculties, of mind and body, were his gift. Both their capacities for enjoyment, and the means of gratifying them, are derived from him. It requires no arguments, comparatively, to prove, that as God created men, and gave them their powers, it is his right to govern them, and to point out the manner in which they shall employ the faculties he has bestowed. It is a dictate of reason, that God could not have created men without some design, worthy of the wisdom, and glory, and excellency of his nature. Nor can it be doubted, that he had an infinite right, to determine to promote, through the instrumentality of created agents, those grand designs, which in his wisdom he ordained. It cannot fail to be equally evident, as God is the fountain of being and of blessedness, and sustains by his power the whole system of moral agency, that he must make his own glory, the supreme end of all his actions. 'Tis in this way, only, that he can promote creature happiness. For, as all good is derived from him, and is dependent on him, so to be indifferent to his own glory, would in effect be, to be indifferent to creature happiness.

Can no one exist without God? Can no one be happy without God? Are his designs, like his own nature, benevolent and wise? And, is the accomplishment of them identified

with his glory, and the happiness of creatures ? Then all created intelligences are under infinite obligations to submit to his will, and to employ all their powers to advance his praise.

God has not created men, and angels, and left it optional with them, whether they will serve him or not, without holding them to a responsibility, most solemn in its results, for the choice they make. He has made them to subserve certain ends ; and has bound them by laws adapted to the principles of their physical and moral constitution. These laws, they are under solemn obligations to obey ; obligations that are paramount to any others, that are possible to them. 'Tis thence evident, that to treat these laws contemptuously, or to pass them by, with cold indifference, is treating the Eternal Lawgiver with contempt, and is infinitely criminal.

Nor is this criminality limited, simply, to the consideration that God is treated contemptuously ; but it is exceedingly enhanced, when we remember, that the good of the moral universe is connected with the Divine glory. Every one, who treats his Maker with indifference, by that very act, declares himself an enemy to the good of being, as he is at enmity with him, on whom are suspended, the hopes of unnumbered millions of creatures, of different orders, and various degrees of intellectual and moral capacity.

Who, my friends, holds you in life, from day to day, and from time to time ? Who has bestowed upon you the felicities attending your circumstances in the present life ? To whom do you look for support in death ? And on whom, hang your



hopes, for eternity? Can you lightly pass by the claims of your Maker, and think yourselves free from guilt?

But take one other view of God. Look at him, as his full glories shine in the face of Jesus Christ, and say—can you trifle with the blood-bought pardon of the Son of God, and feel unconscious of criminality? When God created man, he made him upright, and he was happy. But he rebelled, and became the enemy of his Maker. By his rebellion, he became an outlaw, and might have been left of his Creator, to utter, and interminable wretchedness. Under these circumstances, God, as if desiring, by one overwhelming exhibition of his mercy, to melt the heart of rebellion, and to restore his fallen subjects to duty and happiness, poured upon the darkness that overspread the face of creation, the cheering light of the Sun of righteousness; and the entrance, of the Lord of glory, upon our world, is announced by heavenly visitants, proclaiming “*peace on earth and good will to men.*” In God manifested in the flesh, the wonder of the first creation is lost; and through him is exhibited to the admiring view of men and angels, the fulness of the Godhead bodily. “The Lord of glory, died for men.” For you, my friends, who reject his gospel, and have never, seriously, given yourselves up, to inquire after your obligations to him, nor seek the saving knowledge of his name, God has not only invited you to contemplate his wisdom and his power, as exhibited in the wonders which he has thrown abroad upon immensity, but having concentrated both, in the person of Jesus Christ, his voice also, addresses you from the high heaven, saying—



“*This is my beloved Son ; hear ye him.*” Bound to the love and obedience of your Maker, by creation ; invited to a remembrance of your obligations, by preserving goodness, in every step of your pathway to the eternal world ; aroused out of your slumbers, by the death cry of the Lord of life ; and moved to sympathy, by his streaming blood, O, who, but God, can measure the guilt of your neglect ? And what, but the blood of Calvary, can wash away your stain ?

Is the conduct of those who reject the gospel, without examining its evidence, criminal ? So is it also, *irrational*.

God has given us rational faculties, and has accompanied the gospel, with abundant evidence of its divine authenticity. We have, then, both the power, and the means of arriving at the truth, in this great concern. I say this great concern not only, because the gospel makes high claims, but also, because, if it be true, it is, most emphatically, *the great concern*.

I am happy in believing, my friends, that I need say nothing, to promote in you a conviction, of the truth of the gospel, and of the righteousness of its claims upon your obedience and love. This conviction you have. You are not chargeable with rejecting the gospel, in *speculation*. 'Tis not probable, if you should embrace it in your *hearts*, that your speculative conviction of its truth, would be very materially different from what it is now. No.—Your reason, and your conscience are on the side of your Maker, and urge you forward, to duty and happiness. 'Tis your *heart* that rejects the gospel of the Son of God. 'Tis the blindness of your heart, that darkens your understanding, that perverts and corrupts your

judgement, and leads you to wrong, and criminal conclusions, with regard to your duty, notwithstanding you know that the gospel is true, and that it points out to you, the only sure way, to God, and glory. But with all the light and conviction you have on this subject, with your acknowledgment of obligation, pressing upon your conscience, it is nevertheless sadly true, so long as you withhold your hearts from God, and choose your own pleasures, and your own ways, that you reject the gospel of Christ.

Were you inquired of, for the reason that you reject it, what would you be able to say? You could not take the ground of the simple Deist, nor of the Infidel, and say, that you do not *believe* the gospel, and therefore reject it. Were you called Infidels, or Deists, you would consider yourselves unjustly charged. I will not call you so. But I am compelled to ask, feeling as I do, a most tender regard for your souls—How can you reconcile your conduct, with your own convictions of truth? You believe the gospel. Who is its author? What does it teach? What bearing will a practical rejection of it have upon your eternity? How will you answer it, to your Maker, when you shall stand before him, that you have professed to believe the gospel in speculation, and yet, have rejected it in your hearts, and have been unfaithful in your lives? You believe, that the gospel, is the gospel of God our Saviour. You believe, that it points out the way to heaven, and warns you of the wrath to come; and that you will be judged, in the last day, by the grand truths which it developes. How then, in consistency with such a faith as this, can you

remain indifferent to its truths ? How can you disregard your own interest, connected as it is, with what the gospel teaches and enjoins ? Here, you feel, lies your everlasting all. Here, you see God, and Christ, and heaven, and hell, and good and bad angels, and good and bad men, all characterized, and their different circumstances and allotments exhibited. And you believe all. But ah ! What then ? Why, you say with respect to all, I will look at these things at another time. At another time ? What time is that ? Who has told you that it will ever come ? Has it ever yet once arrived ? Then have you seriously thought on God, and given your hearts to him. But is it so with you ? Do you love him to day ? Or are you not now, preparing to say, “ *we will hear thee again of this matter.*”

Remember, my friends that it is God and Christ that you put off ; and put off too, in the very face of your own convictions. Remember that it is your own souls, that you neglect. You are persuaded, that if you continue in your present course, until your end shall come, your case will be hopeless for eternity : And yet you continue, and continue too, in the very face of the most solemn, and sometimes alarming convictions. How can you account for your astonishing indecision, on the subject of religion ? How is it, that you can be at peace with yourselves, for taking a course, which, if you should take in your temporal concerns, would bring you to a speedy ruin ? You have decision of character in every thing, besides the concern, which is confessedly of more importance, than any thing else in the universe. combined. How can you

think on God, with the least peace of mind, if, for a moment, you suffer yourselves to remember, that he knows all your heart and ways ? When you reject him in your heart, he is present, and sees you do it. He knows all the workings of your mind ; and is himself the eternal, living witness, to the indignity with which you treat him. Blessed be his glorious name for ever, for his long suffering patience. And O, may every one of your hearts, with overflowing penitency and gratitude, now say, AMEN.

But, my friends, let me entreat you to remember, that the course you pursue, is an infinitely *dangerous* course. The patience, even of God, may be exhausted. You are warned that there will come a time, when his ear shall be shut to the cry of your distress, and his eye shall look upon your agony, and show no pity.

The blood of Jesus Christ is very precious in the sight of God. He cannot always endure, that sinners should treat it with lightness, and contempt. He is indeed the God of love, but the very benevolence which led him to provide a Saviour, will add fierceness to his wrath, when he shall come out of his place, to punish the impenitent. Are you sensible of your danger ? Avoid it, then, I beseech you, by a timely surrendry of your whole heart, to him, who is the world's HOPE of redemption.

I add a single remark, and leave you in the hands of that mighty Saviour, whose cause I have attempted to plead.

We see from our subject, that we have great reason to fear, that a great many, who have been celebrated for their

wisdom, and have figured largely upon the world's theatre, will number at last, with the enemies of God.

The Epicurians and Stoicks of our world, the emperors and kings, the men of civil and military distinction, and renown, the ingenious, the witty, and the rich, in the pride of their own sufficiency, have often thought the gospel beneath their notice, and have not deigned to stoop to the feet of him, who, though once in humiliation on the Cross, is now exalted to be Lord over all. 'Tis seldom the case, that persons of this description have united their interests, and honours, with the Prince of Peace, and have been willing, that his banner should wave in triumph, over their philosophy, their crowns, and their stars.

To the wise of this world, the preaching of the Cross is not unfrequently, foolishness : But unto them that are called, it is, "*Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*"

Let us remember, that in the wonderful scheme of saving mercy, God has made foolish the wisdom of this world. This fact has been evinced, by a long course of experience, in which God, was pleased to give to man an opportunity to try his prowess, and his skill, until the power of his philosophy was converted into feebleness, and the resources of his science were exhausted. Under the labour and struggle of untired effort, the darkness *thickened*, and *thickened*, and *thickened*, over the moral world, until the glorious God of heaven burst upon it with the light of redemption, and, in one blest moment, taught to its bewildered population, that "*the world by wisdom knew not God.*" Suffer me then, in conclusion, my

brethren, to exhort you, in the language of Jehovah, by the prophet Jeremiah—"Thus saith the Lord—Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches : But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth ; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."



## SERMON XV.\*

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“ But whereunto shall I liken this generation ? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows, and saying—We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold, a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.

MATTHEW xi. 16, 17, 18, 19.

It appears, from the parable history given by Luke, of the facts here recorded by Matthew, that we are not to understand, that all of that generation, were designed to be included by our Saviour, in the characteristick representation here given. Luke observes, “ That all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John ; but the pharisees, and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him.” By that generation, therefore, the Saviour meant a particular des-

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\*Preached at the inauguration of the Rev. Mr. Strong, Phelpsstown, and of the Rev. Mr. Brace, Utica.

cription of men ; *some*, having not only believed the preaching of John, but having, also, justified God, by believing the doctrines taught by Jesus Christ.

The persons to whom he alluded, were those who thought they held the keys of knowledge, and boasting that they had Abraham to their father, supposed themselves very religious : Consequently, they would not receive the instruction, nor follow the example, either of Christ, or his forerunner, John. These were the men of that generation, whom Christ compares to perverse and obstinate children, who would neither dance, when their fellows piped to them, nor mourn, when they lamented. Wholly satisfied with themselves, and proud of their own attainments, they would not receive advice and instruction, come in what shape, and from what source soever it might.

Having finished the allegory, the Saviour applies it, by clearly showing its object and design. This he does, by stating two facts, which both *illustrate* and *confirm* it. “ *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold, a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.*” They were pleased, neither with the severe virtue of John, nor with the mildness and affability of Christ. John was fond of solitude ; held little intercourse with men, except in his publick ministrations ; was abstemious, and contemplative in his manner of life ; and seemed intensely, and almost exclusively absorbed, in the publick duties of the ministry assigned him. Hating his instructions,

his countrymen professed to be disgusted with his character and manners ; and they were ready to apply to him, in its worst sense, an ancient proverb, “ that every solitary person, is either an angel, or a devil.”

Now, to show that their objection to John was not founded on principle, *Christ* pursued a course, so far as regarded his manners, and his intercourse with men, of a character, and in almost every respect, opposite to that of John. He was familiar, accessible, and sociable. He conversed with men of every character, condition and rank. He exhibited a perfect pattern of amiableness, condescension, humility, and benevolence. But all this had no other effect, upon the proud, impenitent sinners of that generation, than, to call out the malignity of their hearts against the purity and spirituality of his doctrines, the benignity of his deportment, and the unvarying excellency of his example.

Sinners never have been pleased with any exhibitions God has made of himself, either by direct communication, or by the faithful instructions of his servants.

There was nothing, in John's manner of life, nor in that of Christ, which would have offended the Jews, independent of the doctrines which they both taught. The *ostensible* ground of objection to them, was their manner of life ; but the *real* ground was hatred to the *truths* they inculcated. It was the *preaching*, of John, and of Christ, that was offensive, and in this particular, though differing in their manner of life, they both agreed. They did not adapt their doctrines to the taste and inclination of their auditors, nor modify, nor suppress the

truth, to court, and secure their favour : On the contrary, they ever exhibited those truths, that were most directly adapted to the character and circumstances of their hearers, and best calculated to awaken conviction. They were plain, faithful, and pungent in their preaching, and therefore, they were opposed by the wicked.

Every minister, who imitates these illustrious examples, and especially, that, of our adorable Saviour, must expect similar opposition at the hands of sinners. If, therefore, he means to be faithful ; if he desires to secure the approbation of his Lord and Master ; he cannot expect so to preach as to please the wicked : And this is the point to which I shall at this time invite your attention.

THE FAITHFUL MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST CANNOT EXPECT,  
SO TO PREACH, AS TO PLEASE THE WICKED.

He cannot expect this, because—

I. THE BLESSED GOD HIMSELF HAS NEVER PLEASED THE  
WICKED.

Every exhibition that God has made of himself has been displeasing to the carnal mind. The whole history of his dispensations towards mankind, uniformly confirms this remark. The Jews were never, for any considerable period, satisfied with the positive institutions, nor with the preceptive, and doctrinal instructions which God gave them, through the ministry of the prophets. If, at any time, there seemed to be a rational recognition of God's authority, and right of government, it was only, whilst the pious part of their nation had the ascendancy. The impenitent among them, were uniformly

dissatisfied, with the whole administration of their heavenly King. His mercies made them proud, and scornful, and his judgements had no other effect on them, than to harden their hearts, and make them stiffen their neck against God. He, who is at all familiar, with the history of the Jewish nation, as spread upon the sacred record, will readily perceive, that there is abundant evidence, in confirmation of these remarks. Nor are they applicable to the Jews only.—An inspired apostle tells us, that the heathen are without excuse, because the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen in his works, and that, although they had the opportunity of thus attaining to the knowledge of God, yet they glorified him not as God. They were wise in their own eyes, but fools in fact, changing “*the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image, like to corruptible man, and birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*”

It is on the fact, that mankind are capable, by a proper application to the subject, to attain to the knowledge of the “*eternal power and Godhead*” of the Creator, that the apostle founds the doctrine of vindictive justice, when he declares, that “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men.*” What the apostle here asserts, in connexion with what he says in his letter to the Corinthians, is evidence, that God has never pleased the wicked.

Neither Jews, nor Greeks were pleased with the preaching of a crucified Saviour. To the former, he was a stumbling block, and to the latter, foolishness. It was pride of heart in

both, that led them to reject Christ. 'The Jews' expected a mighty temporal prince, who should lead them forth, to triumph and national glory. On the Lord Jesus Christ, in the circumstances of poverty and wretchedness, under which he appeared, they could not build the hope, that their expectations would be realized. The Greeks, on the other hand, tested the virtue and truth of every thing by their philosophy ; and finding, in a crucified Saviour, "*God manifested in the flesh,*" a subject, infinitely beyond their line of admeasurement, for height, and depth, for length, and breadth, they counted the preaching of the Cross of Christ foolishness. And to *all that perish*, the apostle declares the preaching of the Cross, foolishness. We thence see, that the most affecting and tender display, that God has ever made, of himself, has been displeasing to the carnal heart.

Every impenitent man, so far as regards the obligations, and duties of Christianity, has more or less of the heart, both of the Greek, and the Jew. God has never taught any truths, with respect to his character, and government, and with respect to the characters, obligations, and destiny of men, that have been pleasing to the carnal mind. He has entreated, and threatened ; he has invited and commanded ; he has spoken in accents of melting mercy on Calvary, and in the voice of thunder from Sinai, and all without effect. Sinners have been equally displeased, with every representation he has given of his perfections, and with every truth, he has sanctioned by his authority. With every thing that he has done, the carnal heart has some fault to find. Nothing is exactly



suited to its taste, and inclination. The preaching of the apostles, of Christ, of John, his forerunner, and of the prophets, was never acceptable to the carnal heart. It is well known that their ministry was met, by one unabated tide of opposition from the wicked in their day.

Truth is like an invariable and eternal unity. It does not change its nature, with the changes of time, nor with the changing circumstances and condition of men. It ever has been true, and ever will be true, that God is a holy being ; that he hates sin and loves holiness ; that the carnal mind is opposed to God, and in love with sin ; that an honest and faithful exhibition of God and his government, and of the character, obligations, and desert of sinners, has awakened feelings of hostility in the natural heart. It should seem thence, that the faithful minister of Jesus Christ, has little ground to expect to please the wicked ; and he, who, in his publick ministrations, never finds the wicked disturbed at any thing he exhibits, has no small reason to fear, that there is a radical defect, either in the *manner* in which he exhibits truth, or in the *kind* of truth which he exhibits.

The design of God, in the revelation of his *will* to mankind, and in establishing a ministry to declare it, was doubtless, to instruct men into a knowledge of the truth, and thus, to draw out the feelings of their hearts towards it. It is by this means, only, that their characters can be known, and the great point settled, whether they are the friends, or the enemies of God.

Now, the truth being as it is ; and supposing the temper of the carnal mind, such as God has declared it, it is difficult to

conceive, how truth can be fairly, and faithfully exhibited, without awakening the opposition of the wicked, by disturbing the carnal security of their minds. I will not affirm, that it may not be laid down as a principle, that the truth may be so exhibited, as always to command the attention of the minds of men, and so far to engage the feelings of their hearts, as uniformly to excite in them, emotions of pleasure or disgust. The sanctified heart always loves most, the most clear, and plain exhibition of truth, where there is an intelligent, and well cultivated mind; and the unsanctified heart, on the other hand, is always most violent in its opposition, to the clearest exhibition, of the most important truths of the gospel.

If the principle just alluded to, may be adopted, then, he who means to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, cannot expect, so to preach as to please the wicked. The ministry of the prophets, and apostles, was manifestly very offensive to sinners; and these faithful servants of God, resolved to please their Master, rather than court the favour of the wicked, were many of them, called at once, to the sufferings, and the triumphs of martyrdom for their fidelity.

John urged upon his hearers, the doctrine of repentance, and enforced his instructions by a peculiar, though seemingly severe sanctity of manners. The Lord Jesus Christ, also, preached the doctrine of repentance, and all its concomitant, and implied truths, and he too, enforced his instructions, by a life of peculiar, and engaging affability, and amiableness. But it was said of John, he hath a devil; and of the blessed Saviour, behold, a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of

publicans and sinners. John's life of abstemiousness, and solitude, would not have troubled the men of his day, if it had not been for his faithful, and pungent preaching : And the kind, and social manners of the Saviour, would have secured to him, the friendship and applause of his whole nation, if he had united with the Pharisees, in their views of religion, and had not denounced the judgements of God upon their wickedness, and by laying bare their hypocrisy, made a sense of it burn upon their consciences. It cannot be supposed, that their opposition to either, was founded on any impropriety, or inconsistency in their life, and conversation. It must have arisen, wholly, from their fidelity, in discharging the duties of their high official station. They brought the hope of the hypocrite, to the touchstone of truth, and it was annihilated. The pride of his self-sufficiency was humbled, and he was compelled to look at himself, as an absolute dependent, on sovereign mercy.

This despoiling of their glory, this annihilation of their hopes, this exposure of their spiritual nakedness, and poverty, excited the violent opposition of the wicked of that generation, and it can hardly be expected, that a similar method of plain dealing, should not always be attended with the same result. He who enters into the ministry, therefore, or continues in it, with an expectation, that he shall be able, so to preach, as to please the wicked, must look for such effects as never attended the ministry of his Master, nor any of the means which heaven has employed to reduce sinners to submission, unaccompanied with the energy of the Eternal Spirit.

As God never has, by any exhibition he has made of himself, pleased the wicked, so we remark—

## II. THEN HE NEVER CAN PLEASE THEM.

This is evident—

### 1. Because he cannot change.

There is such an infinite difference between God and the sinner, as well in their moral feelings, as in their nature, that to produce a union of sentiment, and effort, as it regards the ends which both are pursuing, either God, or the sinner must be changed. There must be an abandonment of prerogative, on one side, or a submission to rightful authority on the other. To God, change is impossible, both as it regards his nature, and his will. He is "*from everlasting, to everlasting the same.*" "*He is of one mind, and who can turn him?*" But there is nothing in the physical constitution of the sinner, that renders change impossible to him. His opposition to God is voluntary; and it is on the fact, that it is in his power to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, that his responsibility is founded. As God cannot please the wicked without giving countenance to crime, and setting himself, in the operations of his government, in hostile array, against his own infinite perfections, it is thence, most evident, that no minister, who is not prepared for treachery against heaven, and ready to build up himself, by abandoning the cause of his Sovereign, can expect, so to preach as to please the wicked, and yet think to stand acquitted at last, as a servant who had been sincerely devoted to the interests of his Lord and Master. But—

2. If God should ever change, this would not alter the state of the sinner's feelings. Let God be supposed a changeable being, and the objections to his government, would be a thousand fold increased.

Sinners are now called to contemplate a being of infinite and incomprehensible attributes, of high and dreadful providential movements, as the author of their existence, the source of their blessings, and the controller of their destiny. Neither they, nor the brightest and purest of sons of the morning, are capable of casting a thought half way to God. The interrogatory, "*Canst thou by searching, find out God?*" "*Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*" is peculiarly adapted to show the sinner his own nothingness, and to teach him lessons of humility, when he reflects for a moment, in what a boundless abyss of wisdom and inscrutableness, lie concealed, the uncreated glories of the Godhead. But let God be supposed subject to change; and who cannot see, how objections against his character, and attributes, and government would multiply? Where would be the encouragement to confidence in his promises, or the ground to fear his threatened wrath?—What reason to hope, that his government, although administered to-day, on principles of moral rectitude, would be so administered to-morrow?

Much as sinners are opposed to God, as he has revealed himself in his word; much as they hate the purity of his character, and the sovereignty of his reign; if they should suppose him capable of change, they would contemplate both his administration and his character, with increasing dread

and horror ; and feeling their interests infinitely unsafe in his hands, would fortify themselves in their rebellion, under the hope, and a hope, too, by no means desperate in its prospects, that they might break away from his control, and eventually become the arbiters of the destinies of their Sovereign.

If nothing that God can do, will please the wicked, then the minister who expects to succeed by a temporizing policy, makes pretensions both high, and daring.

The faithful minister of Christ, cannot expect, so to preach as to please the wicked, because—

III. UNREGENERATE MEN HAVE UNIFORMLY BEEN OPPOSED TO THOSE TRUTHS, WHICH CONSTITUTE THE ESSENTIAL EXCELLENCY AND GLORY, OF THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.

Unsanctified men are opposed to those truths, that give dignity, and supremacy to the character and reign of God ; which make him the holy, and rightful sovereign, and arbiter of the moral universe ; and accord to him, the sole prerogative of determining, both the method, and the subjects of pardoning mercy. Does God bend over them with the melting tenderness of a *father*, and kindly offer them forgiveness, on the condition of their repentance ? The implication of their *guilt*, which is contained in the very overtures of mercy, awakens the resentment of their proud, and unhumiliated hearts. They cannot endure the thought, that they are so far involved in guilt and ruin, that they are objects of pity ; and thence they spurn at the compassion, even of God himself. When they learn, that as a Sovereign, God has determined to give efficacy to the system of grace which he has established,



and that, although they may reject the offers of his love, he will, nevertheless, circle his throne of glory, with sinners redeemed from the guilt, and ruin of the apostacy, by having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion, on whom he will have compassion, they call in question the rectitude of his administration, and are prepared to resist the wisdom, and the power of the Eternal. Unwilling, *themselves*, to submit, on the terms proposed in the gospel, they would even control God, in his methods of dispensing mercy to *others*. They would deny him the right, of doing as he pleases with his own.

Does he address them, in the authoritative language of un-derived sovereignty, and demand their submission, under the penalty of his infinite displeasure? They not only call in question his mercy, but dare, also, to charge him with injustice and cruelty. They regard not the compassion, nor fear the justice of the Almighty. They are neither awed by threatened wrath, nor melted, by bleeding love. They are opposed to all the methods which infinite wisdom has chosen, to fill the universe with peace and joy, and to pour, upon the astonished view of created beings, a flood of light and glory.

Before he can be successful in his purpose, that minister, who expects so to preach as to please the wicked, must turn traitor to his God, and abandon those truths, that support his throne, and give interest, and lustre to the scheme of redemption.

No minister of the gospel can expect so to preach as to please the wicked, because—

IV. SUCH AN EXPECTATION, CALLS IN QUESTION, THE TRUTH OF THE DIVINE TESTIMONY, WITH REGARD TO THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF MAN.

God declares, that the carnal mind is enmity, both against himself, and his truth. That the hearts, of the children of men, are fully set in them to do evil. That their minds are carnal, sold under sin. Hence, every attempt to please them, is an attempt to change the truth of God into a lie.

It is the duty of the ambassadors of Christ, to treat with men, in exact accordance with the great principles contained in their instructions. One of these principles, and a fundamental one too, is, that men are, by nature, the enemies of God. This truth must be plainly exhibited to the sinner, and the guilt, and danger of his situation, must be urged upon him. God is not to come down to the sinner's terms, but the sinner's to come to God's terms; and to this end, it is necessary, that he should both know what God is, and what he requires; and that he should be acquainted, also, with his own character, and in what light God views him. In imparting this knowledge and instruction, the minister of Christ must exhibit those truths, that are against the whole current of the sinner's passions.

Now, to expect to please the sinner, by the exhibition of truth, it matters not, I would almost say, under what form of modification, if we suppose the exhibition such, as that the sinner perceives it, is virtually, denying the necessity, both of the doctrine, and ministry of reconciliation; and calling in question, that fundamental truth, which is sanctioned, both by

the divine testimony, and by the guilt, and ruin, of a world at war with heaven, that “*the carnal mind is enmity against God.*”

How can any one expect, by preaching God, to interest the feelings, and win over, to the love and obedience of his Master, those, who hate him with all their hearts? No, that minister, who would secure the confidence, and approbation of the wicked, can do it, only, as he is prepared to sacrifice both God, and his truth, to his own dread of popular displeasure, or his ungodly love of popular favour.

No minister of the gospel can expect, so to preach, as to please the wicked, because—

#### V. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NECESSARY TO CHANGE THE HEART.

The experience of six thousand years testifies, that no unregenerate man ever has submitted to the truth, and rejoiced in it, without being influenced to it, by the powerful operations of the Eternal Spirit of truth.

God never designed that any thing, besides truth, should effectually, and savingly operate on the minds of men, to bring them to repentance. Thence it is, that the truth is the mighty instrument employed by the Holy Spirit, in the conviction, enlightening, and sanctification of men. He does not bring sinners to submit to God, by making them believe, that they are not so great sinners as God represents them to be, in his word, nor by persuading them, that their sins partake more of the nature of infirmities, than of the nature of wilful, and guilty opposition to God. On the contrary, he sets their sins in order before them. He brings up, under the

mind's review, the sins of past years. He makes them feel a sense of guilt, so deep, and pungent, that they are prepared to take the side of God, and to anticipate his decision in their case, by pronouncing sentence of condemnation against themselves. He makes them both acknowledge, and feel, that all is right in God, and lovely, and glorious ; and that all is wrong in themselves, and hateful, and debasing. He effects such a radical change in their views, both of God and themselves, as nothing but the power of his efficiency could produce.

The history of God's gracious dealings with mankind, from the beginning of the world, teaches us, that no sinner ever has submitted, without the agency of the Spirit. It is his mighty energy, alone, that gives effect to the most faithful exhibition of truth. How feeble, then, must be the hope of accomplishing that, by unfaithfulness to God, to which the utmost faithfulness is inadequate, without divine aid ?

Behold, five reasons, that the faithful minister of Jesus Christ, should not expect, so to preach, as to please the wicked ; and see, also, five solemn, and affecting evidences, of the lamentable, and depraved obstinacy of the human heart.

God, in all the exhibitions he has made of himself, has never pleased the wicked.—He cannot please them.—The distinguishing truths of the gospel, are objects of their supreme aversion.—Their hearts being totally carnal, and selfish, they cannot be pleased, but as the truth is sacrificed to their corruptions—And the experience of six thousand

years testifies, that under the light of truth, less or more clear, and forcible in its exhibitions, not a sinner has been brought to submit to its authority, but as influenced, by the all-subduing energy of the Holy Ghost.

### INFERENCES.

1. If truth is the grand instrument employed by the Spirit, to effectuate the salvation of men, then, sinners should both be willing, and tenderly anxious, to know the worst of their case. They cannot be saved by a lie. Truth, only, can do them good. Of this, in their reflecting moments, they must be sensible. They know that God cannot change ; and there are seasons of ingenuous candour of thought, and feeling, when they would shudder at the apprehension, that change might be possible to him. After all their hostility to what God has revealed respecting himself, their secret hopes, strange as it may seem, hang on him. Not because they take any delight in him, but, because they are fully persuaded, that heaven, and hell are in his hands. If they are ever saved, they feel that God alone can save them. They are sensible, too, that to enjoy God, they must be like him : But how can they become like him, if they are unacquainted with the perfections of his nature, and neither know, nor understand any thing, about those great principles of his moral administration, that are based upon his eternal, and unchangeable attributes ? If they were alive to their own real interest, they would abhor the man, who, professing to be a minister of reconciliation, should suppress those parts of his instructions, which constitute the very elementary conditions, on which alone, a

permanent, and glorious peace can be ratified, between God, and their souls.

Every people, then, should encourage their minister to preach the whole truth. It is their life. Both he, and they, must appear, before the bar of judgement ; and nothing but truth, shall bear the test of the divine scrutiny, on that day, when their eternal destiny shall be settled.

2. If it is impossible for the infinite Creator, so to exhibit himself, as to please the ungodly, then, every attempt in his ministers, so to exhibit him, as to please them, is as wicked, as it is fruitless; Has he failed? How can they hope to be successful? Has he failed? How can they be successful, but as they change the truth of God into a lie, and sacrifice his glory, at the altar of selfishness and sin? He has called, but sinners have refused. He has stretched out his hands, almighty to save. but sinners have disregarded. That minister must consent to desecrate the truth of heaven, to preach over his mighty Maker's glories, prostrated, and despoiled at his feet, who attempts, so to deliver his message, as to please the ungodly.

We hesitate not, to charge the heretical preacher, with treachery against his God: But on what principle can he think to justify himself, who, to avoid the frowns, or secure the flatteries of men, exhibits truth, in such select portions, or under such forms of modification, as he deems best adapted to promote his purpose? He has received his commission from his Master, all made out to his hand. The broad seal of heaven is set to it. Its instructions are clear, full and de-



finite. The principles, upon which he is to treat with men, as Christ's ambassador, are not of doubtful import, nor of difficult interpretation. He knows, that these principles, as exhibited by God himself, by the prophets, and apostles, and by the mild, yet authoritative, and unvarying fidelity of Jesus Christ, have been uniformly resisted by the carnal heart. With these illustrious examples before him, his commission in his hand, and his instructions constantly under his eye, I ask not, on what he can found his hopes of success: But I would ask, what can be the secret motive of his soul, when, by a selection, or modification of the truth, he undertakes to sit in judgement, upon the wisdom of heaven's communication to men? Every attempt of this kind, betrays a naked selfishness of heart, that is prepared to sacrifice the glory of God, to secure the flatteries, and smiles of his enemies.

3. If unregenerate men are opposed to the distinguishing, and essential truths of the gospel, we see the importance, that these truths should be plainly, and forcibly urged upon them. Their submissions are demanded, to the very truths which they hate; and in these truths, we find the grand points of controversy, between God, and their souls. But they must believe them or their destruction is sure.

Divest the revelation of heaven of those attributes that are offensive to the wicked, and you strip it of all its distinguishing characteristicks, and efface from it, the impress of the divine hand. Nay, more, you not only put to hazard the salvation of those who hear you, but labour, also, to the full extent of your influence, to seal them over to final, and inevi-

table ruin. How necessary then, that the minister of the gospel should propound, and explain the whole truth of God, distinctly and perspicuously, and urge it upon sinners, with a force, and earnestness, that shall persuade them, that he is deeply penetrated with a sense of their danger ; and that he is prepared to risk the forfeiture of their friendship, rather than suppress those doctrines of the Bible, on which, he fully believes, the salvation of their souls depends.

Sinners must perish ; there is no hope of redemption for them, if they know not God, if they are unacquainted with the great principles connected with the scheme of mercy.—And at whose hands will the blood of their souls be required, if they have waited upon the ministrations of the sanctuary, and have lived and died ignorant of both ?

Should it be demanded, what those doctrines are, that may be deemed essential to the scheme of grace, I reply—The entire moral depravity of man—the renovation of the heart, by the operation of the Holy Spirit—disinterested, or impartial love—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only medium of pardon, and salvation—growth in grace, or progressive sanctification—perseverance unto eternal glory, through the promised agency of the Divine Spirit—and the universal, and absolute sovereignty of God, exercised, in so directing and controlling the actions of moral agents, as to accomplish all the good pleasure of his will ; and in the personal election of such sinners to endless life, as he has determined from eternity to save. These truths, God has joined together, and no man can attempt to put asunder, without ap-

plying an adventurous hand, to despoil, and blight a system of benevolence and mercy, projected by the wisdom, and sanctioned by the authority of the Eternal. These, however, are the truths which sinners hate ; but on the knowledge, and cordial belief of them, substantially, their salvation depends. And who shall teach them to sinners, if *they* do not, who are appointed by God to this very purpose ?

4. If nothing but the power of God, does ever render the truth effectual, to the salvation of sinners, then, those who labour to exhibit it, in the least offensive form, gain nothing by it. If an angel from heaven should preach the whole truth, with all the fidelity, and clearness of unpolluted, and unimpaired faculties, the excellency of its power would still be of God. If the success of such a pure, spiritual intelligence, in exhibiting the truth, as it comes from the lips of heavenly wisdom, would be attributable to the efficiency of that infinite, invisible Agent, who moves upon the powers, and controls the destiny of creatures, what hope of success can he indulge, who would gain upon the wicked, by keeping out of view, the offence of the Cross ? He has far less reason to hope, that he shall win souls to Christ, than that faithful servant of his Master, who preaches the whole truth, how offensive soever it may be to the wicked. He may pass well, with the enemies of his Lord, as a smooth, and elegant preacher. He may succeed, in not calling into active opposition, the secret enmity of the sinner's soul, against God. He may even feel gratified with his own wisdom, and prudence, when he hears some of his brethren complained of,

for clearly holding up to view, some of the most obnoxious doctrines of the Bible. And what then? Is any thing accomplished for eternity? Are the stupid sinners, to whom he preaches, any nearer heaven? Or any less exposed to hell? How much has been done, by this soft, accommodating, modified method of exhibiting God, and his truth? I will tell you, my brethren. A congregation of condemned, and hopeless immortals have been put to sleep; their pathway to the world of wo has been smoothed; and they will slip the more easily, and unsuspectingly into hell.

Such cannot possibly be the result, where truth is faithfully, and clearly exhibited. Truth will make its way to the sinner's heart; it will agitate his soul; alarm his fears; and conscience, kept wakeful, and sensitive by its influence, will be constantly forestalling his doom, and by holding up to his view, the terrors of the damned, will urge him to fly from the wrath to come. If, under these circumstances, he perishes at last, his mind enlightened into a knowledge of the truth, and his heart at enmity with it, he must lie down eternally, under the keen reflection, that he is the guilty author of his own ruin.

It is acknowledged, on all hands, that the Bible exhibits many doctrines that are offensive to the carnal mind. Now, it is clear, that these doctrines are so *presented* in the Bible, that the bearing they have upon the character, and the relations they sustain to the future prospects of sinners, are perceived by them. Can these doctrines be faithfully exhibited, when all that renders them offensive, as the Eternal

Spirit has exhibited them, is removed, or covered over, by words without knowledge, or lost, under such relations, and connexions as God never has sanctioned? How is it, that the Spirit of inspiration was so unsuccessful, as not to exhibit the truths in question, in the same inoffensive and harmless form? Why was he not more cautious of offending sinners, least, by making them angry, he should endanger their salvation? And endanger their salvation, by being angry, with what? With the true, and faithful representation of the eternal character, and righteous government of the ever blessed God: And a representation too, drawn by his own unerring pen:

I am far from laying it down as a maxim, that a minister should make it a matter of labour, to adopt such a manner, and exhibit truth under such forms of studied paradox, as to offend sinners; supposing it essential to his success, and an infallible evidence of his fidelity, to give offence. But, I am prepared to affirm it as a maxim, and to sustain it too, that no minister can preach, as the Holy Ghost teaches, all the plain truths of the Bible, with clearness, and fulness, in their proper relations, and connexions, and in all their bearings, and consequences, with regard to the character, and destiny of sinners, without giving offence: And he, who, for any length of time, has been in the ministry, and finds not testimony, to the truth of this remark, in his own experience, has great reason to apprehend, however sincere and honest he may have been, that he has adopted some false principle, as his guide in duty, or, that his heart has never been deeply

impressed, with a sense of the vast, and weighty concerns, that stand connected with his fidelity, as God's ambassador, appointed to propose terms of reconciliation to guilty men.

The very first step of prudence, in a minister, is to be all on the side of God, both as it respects the truths to be exhibited, and the manner of exhibiting them. I know not, how far short of presumptuous daring, that man comes, who thinks it imprudent, plainly, and on Scriptural grounds, to exhibit such truths, as have uniformly awakened the opposition of the natural heart. He can think so, for two reasons only. He apprehends, either, that he shall lose his influence, and popularity, if he exhibits the offensive truths of the gospel, a motive, altogether unworthy of a minister of Christ; or, under a false impression of what is wise, and prudent, that he shall lessen the prospect of his *usefulness* to sinners. I have only to remark here, that God did not judge thus. Who is able to suppress those truths of the Bible that are offensive to sinners, without exhibiting a modified God, and a modified Saviour, and modified terms of salvation? And upon what fountain of wisdom shall he draw, seeing he has condemned the wisdom of heaven, by which he may determine, to what extent he shall exhibit the character of God, and the principles of his moral government, and under what modes of presentation, he shall make the free offers of pardon, through a crucified Saviour? If, by his means, sinners have formed wrong notions of God, and his administration, what shall they do, when, in the light of eternity, they shall be deceived, and find that the God, in whom they had been



taught to believe, was merely the creature of their own fancy.

Preachers of the description alluded to, are but at best, mere moral essayests, into whose compositions, no divine unction ever enters. Such was not the preaching of the apostles. Such was not the preaching of Christ.

It is indeed true, and it constitutes the distinguishing peculiarity of the Scriptures, that the great truths which they teach, are not laid down in the form of distinct propositions, supported by the application of defined and settled principles of reasoning. Many, perhaps, most of them, seem to be brought into view, in the unstudied detail of matters of fact ; and are introduced as established, and undeniable principles. We see them, under the representations of allegory, and parable ; in various forms of comparison ; and both taught, and illustrated, in historical narration : But, under what form of illustration soever they are presented, they are plain, intelligible, and pointed. It is not difficult to perceive, either their nature, their relations, or their tendencies.

Under those combinations which God has been pleased to establish, it is the duty of the ministers of Christ, to present the great doctrines of the Bible. If they do so, with fidelity, from love to their Master, and with an exclusive reliance on the invisible efficiency of the Eternal Spirit, they may hope to be successful. The God of truth may be expected to bless his own word, and to attend with a divine energy, every faithful exhibition, of what he has communicated to his creatures, as his will.

Preach we modified truth ; or by selecting truth, do we sit in judgement upon the wisdom, and propriety of heaven's communication to men ? We stand in the naked exposure of our own feebleness, and our failure is inevitable. Preach we the whole truth, and so, become the echo of the voice of God to our fellow sinners ?—We stand in the panoply of the high attributes of Jehovah, and our success is as certain, as that God is almighty.

We will not say to you brethren, in reference to what has now been said, “ *we hope better things of you.*” We would rather say, in the language of another, “ we pronounce nothing, we decide upon nothing, we leave every man to his conscience, and his God.”

Truth is mighty. It is the sword of the Spirit. It is the grand instrument by which that infinite Agent operates to promote conviction, and to effect that change in the hearts of men, that is an indispensable preparative, for the kingdom of glory.

Are we workers together with this divine Agent, in extending the triumphs of the Redeemer ? We shall lift our heads with joy, on that day, when he shall open upon the universe, with all the wonders of the judgement scene.

Finally—Placed as we are, my brethren, as watchmen on the walls of Zion, let us each remember, the authoritative injunction of our King—“ *Lift up thy voice like a trumpet ; show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.*” 'Tis our appropriate office-work, to warn the wicked of his way ; to show him, his character of guilt, and his condition of danger.

We are set to watch for souls. Let us do it, under the deep, and solemn conviction, that we must give an account. The souls committed to our charge will meet us before the tribunal of eternal justice. With the solémnities of the great day of God Almighty, constantly in our view, let us labour so to preach, as to save, both ourselves, and those who hear us.

It will not be a subject of regret to us, in the hour of our departure, that we have with too much ardour, and faithfulness, urged upon our dying auditors, the great truths of the Bible ; and entreated them, by the mercies of God, to fly to the cross of Christ as their only refuge.

The time that remains to us, for activity in the service of our Master, is short. Let us gird up the loins of our mind, and watch, and be sober. Let us look well to ourselves, that our skirts be not stained with the blood of lost souls. Let us preach the word. Be instant in season, and out of season. Let us declare the whole truth, whether sinners will hear, or whether they will forbear. Let us, to the best of our abilities, exhibit the full glories of our Maker, as they beam upon us from the face of Jesus, that it may appear at last, that we have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Then, may we hope to stand before our judge, in garments made white in the blood of the Lamb, and to shine in the kingdom of glory, as the stars for ever and ever.—AMEN ! AMEN !



## SERMON XVI.

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*“O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.”*

MICAH vi. 3.

IN language highly figurative, and rich in ornament, God, by calling to the mountains, and to the hills to listen to his controversy with his people, addresses the great, and wise, and powerful of the earth, and invites them to attend to the argument. He then makes a direct appeal to Israel, which is calculated to bring the subject to a speedy issue. He recurs, very briefly, to a few facts in their past history, as illustrative of the whole course of his providential dealings with them. Their deliverance from Egypt, where they were slaves—His leading them out by the hand of Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam.—His kind and successful interposition in the case of Balak, and Balaam. By the facts here exhibited, of the method of his dealings, with them, he challenges them to point out an instance, in the whole course of his conduct, since the calling of Abraham, which was not of the same general character; and from which they might not learn, the deep interest which he took in their prosperity and happiness as a nation. He

appeals to them in the most-affectionate language, and invites them to a careful, and candid review, of what he had done, and what he had required ; and as if dealing with an equal, seems willing to abide the result of the investigation.

In looking at the history of Israel, the benevolent heart is a thousand times pained, at the numerous and affecting instances of their ingratitude ; and is led to admire the patience, and forbearance, and condescension of God.

The evidence of human depravity seems most palpable and convincing, as it is exhibited in the records of human conduct ; and the riches of divine goodness are the most strikingly illustrated, in the conduct of God's providence towards those, who have requited him evil for good, and have practically despised the infinitely gracious source of all their mercies.

We may be told, a thousand times, that men are depraved and ungrateful creatures ; and we may believe them so : But when we see them abusing their Benefactor, and charging their miseries upon the hand that has multiplied blessings on them without number, the evidence becomes so clear, and impressive, as to command the strongest expressions of disgust and condemnation. We may be told too, that God is good ; that infinite compassion dwells in his heart ; and we may believe it so : But when he addresses the ungrateful objects of his bounty and care, in the affectionate and melting language of the text, and see so much ingratitude meet with such heavenly mildness and compassion—" *O my people, what have I done unto thee ?*" The feelings become interested, the heart is moved, and our conviction of the Divine good-



ness, is a thousand times more impressive, by the circumstances, and the manner, in which it has been exhibited.

When we see the depravity of the human heart, as spread upon the record of human actions, unmelted by the blessings of heaven, and unsubdued, by the powerful motives to submission ; when divine mercy, unexhausted amidst all the provocations of guilt, is weeping over the ingratitude of the sinner, who is cursing the hand that would save him, we see man in ignominy, and God in glory ; and in a moment of ingenuous feeling, forgetting that this is but the picture, of which we ourselves are the original, we are ready to vindicate the righteous retributions of justice, and to give God glory upon the throne, when he pours out his fury upon the guilty. And here we have the subject, which it is our design, in what remains, to illustrate—

THE GREATNESS OF THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN, ARGUED, FROM THE DIVINE CONDESCENSION, IN HIS DEALINGS WITH HIM.

1. The text is the language of tender and affectionate complaint ; and implies, that the persons addressed, did not possess such a character, nor exercise such feelings, as God had a right to expect, from his dealings towards them, and their relation to him. 'Tis the language of *parental* complaint, and expressive of the feelings of a heart touched with grief, at viewing the ungrateful conduct of those nearly allied to him, and who had been the objects of his unremitting care ; who had been treated, in the various stages of their national existence, from the time that they were all numbered in one family, until they became a great, and powerful people, with

the same affectionate tenderness, that parents extend towards the children of their bosom. God represents himself, as agitated with the same distress of heart, that affects tender parents at the unnatural conduct of their children, when he contemplates the rebellion, and disobedience of Israel. "*I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*"

They are represented as taken by the hand, at a period when, if they had been deserted, they must have perished ; as being taught of God, as little children are taught by their parents, how to go ; as supplied with every thing necessary to their growth, and comfort, and to qualify them for usefulness in their maturity.

Notwithstanding all this, they not only forget, but curse, also, the hand that led them, and richly supplied all their wants.

Should we see a father, with all the ardour of parental love, exerting himself to rescue from threatening ruin, the son of his bosom ; and on the moment of success, just when he is about to give a loose to the feelings of a heart agitated with trembling joy, receiving at the hand of his child, the most unfeeling and cruel abuse.—Who would not be filled with horror, and indignation, at conduct so unnatural ?

But, my brethren, God has acknowledged that this endearing relation subsists between him and ourselves. He has made us. He has distinguished us, highly, in the privileges

we enjoy. He has guided our past life. His providential arm has been our shield. All our blessings flow from him. We have our breath from God. He keeps pure the air, that it may be the medium of perpetuating, and not of destroying life. Let God fling his poisons on the wind ; let him mingle mineral death with the waters which we use ; and we breath, and drink, and die. But God has made the air the medium of healthful respiration, and the waters pure, and delicious to the taste. We breath, and drink, and fear no evil. He has adapted our natures to the enjoyment of the richest pleasures of society. He has given us the capacity of deriving high and refined gratification, from intellectual pursuits.

His providence, by furnishing the means for employing the faculties of our being, presents a constant variety of incident and event ; opens new fields of investigation ; exhibits new objects of pursuit ; and seems constantly to multiply the means of happiness upon us. At the same time, in every step of our progress, we are taught to enjoy all earthly good, with reference to our eternal prospects ; and monuments stand thick in our pathway, to teach us our mortality, and warn us of the fading glory of the world. We are his witnesses to-day, that he is full of compassion, and that he has the heart of a father, or our ingratitude had long before now, brought down upon us the terrour of his wrath.

Look for a moment, at the life which you have lived towards God, under the continued, and constantly repeated mercies of his hand. God gives you breath.—Do you ever employ it in prayer ? God prospers your business.—Do you

gratefully acknowledge his hand ? He has placed the world before you, that it might minister to your necessities, and your pleasures.—Do you, daily, in this, recognize his goodness, and adore the benevolence and wisdom of his designs ? Or do you not rather lose sight of the Creator, by the love which you bear to the creature ? And always make your duty to your Maker, give precedence to your interests or pleasures ? Do you not, sometimes, wantonly profane the name of God, and sport with the sacred sanctions of his word, and with the condescensions of his love, exhibited in the life's blood of his Son ? Do you not spend weeks, and months, and years, without feeling a grateful emotion towards God, or lifting up to his throne the voice of prayer ? How unwilling are you, although rationally convinced of your obligations, and dependence, to come out decidedly on the side of your God and Saviour ; and to do all in your power for him, who, though infinite in expedient, resources and accomplishments, has done all he could for you. —Ah ! my friends, as God's advocate to-day, I ask you—What has he done unto you ? Wherein has he wearied you, that you should treat him thus ?

2. The address of the text brings to view the relation of Prince, or Sovereign, and his people. “*O my people, what have I done unto you ?*” A Prince, condescending to inquire after the reason for the disloyalty of his subjects.—A Prince, seemingly willing to be tried by his subjects ; ready to hear their reasons ; to listen to their testimony even against himself.—A Prince, that intimates his readiness to remove every cause of complaint. And such, brethren, is our God. He is

tenderly affected when he looks at our character of enmity. He fixes his eye with deep solicitude upon us, and would, that we should be at peace with him, and not destroy ourselves.

Contemplate the character of that adorable Being, in whom we discover these wonderful acts of condescension, and tell me—Is there a name for the depravity of that heart, that can trifle with such condescension? As God's advocate to-day, I ask, what has he done to you, that you should refuse him the homage of your hearts, and the obedience of your lives? Come, and answer the inquiry. It is instituted, by your Maker, your Benefactor, your Redeemer. It is instituted, by him, with whom it lies to determine the destinies of your eternity. View him as your heavenly Father, and has he not consulted in all that he has made you, and in all that he has done for you, the highest happiness of which your natures are capable? Look at your endowments, as a source of present happiness, and as possessing the capabilities, for rich spiritual enjoyment, in the hope of the gospel, and for eternal glory, in the future world. And if you are ready to complain, because you are brought into the world, under such circumstances, as expose you to fall before the imperfections, and corruptions of nature, contemplate with ingenuous feelings the redemption scheme, and acknowledge, what is true on this subject, that the method of recovery presents you, not with the means, merely, of repairing the ruins of the apostacy, but of attaining, to a state of enjoyment and perfectability, also, in all your constitutional powers, infinitely be-



yond, what would otherwise have been possible : That, the ruins of the fall notwithstanding, it lies with yourselves to determine, whether this exceeding weight of glory shall be yours ; or, whether you will barter it away, for the pleasures that die upon the senses. That, even giving all the force to your argument against God, that you would desire, *that* is nevertheless done, in the plan of redemption, which throws into your own hands, your immortal destiny ; and furnishes you with an opportunity, of rising to unutterable heights of felicity and glory, in the presence of your Maker.

When you make your objection, founded on the unhappy constitution of your nature—What will you answer, when you are told of the gospel method of pardon and salvation ? And suppose you carry your principle one step further, and plead, that this method, in its apparently kind overtures, does but mock your miseries, in that it proffers you blessings that lie beyond your reach, and so justify your neglect of God, on the ground of inability ? Do you feel as if you dare to risk, upon the validity of this objection, your eternal all, in the face of your deep seated consciousness of obligation ? In the face of all the tender expostulations, the kind entreaties, the solemn warnings, and the most plain, and unequivocal declarations of God ?

But it was not so much my design to reason with you to-day, as to exhibit the condescensions of our Maker towards our sinful race, by the side of those numerous, and affecting exhibitions which are daily made, of contempt for the name, and authority of God : That in the light of contrast, seeing



the odious nature of sin, and the depths of human depravity, you might be filled with shame and self-aborrence ; and by passing sentence of condemnation on yourselves, might be brought to justify the God that made you.

Shall I ask then—What has God done against you, that should lead you to disregard his authority, and refuse submission to his Son ? Shall I not rather ask—What has he left undone, that he could do for you ?

Let all the excellencies of the human character that have ever been exhibited since the world began, be combined, to give force and extent to intellect, and dignity and loveliness to moral feeling ; all is shade, and darkness, when we contemplate the world's Sovereign, in mysterious combination with the world's VICTIM for sin. The man of Calvary, suspended on the Cross, a spectacle to angels and men, exhibits the adorable Divinity, in an attitude of justice and mercy, of wrath and love, for a moment the terroure, and astonishment of angels, and to eternity the admiration, and joy of a holy universe.

And how, my friends, have our hearts been affected ? He, who was ministered to by angels ; and at whose birth, a multitude of the heavenly host sung a song of glory to God, has doubtless, from but a small proportion of those who hear me, received the tribute of a grateful heart. His hand of mercy pursued us, when we had plunged ourselves into darkness ; and effected deliverance for us, when we were pressing our way onwards to eternal death. And how many sacrifices have we made for him, who died to save us ? What is the

state of our heart to-day, after so long a time, that he has waited, patiently, with us ? O, should he appear in the midst of us, all wounded and bloody, and say, “ *What have I done unto you ? Wherein have I wearied you ?*” Who among us would rise, and say, with hearts influenced by the mingled emotions of ingenuous grief, and grateful transport ? “ *My Lord, and my God !*”

## SERMON XVII.

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*“ For sin is the transgression of the law.”*

I. JOHN, iii. 4, last clause.

THE apostle, having declared, in the preceding context, that every one who entertained the hope, that he should be like Christ in the day of his appearing, would labour to purify himself, even as Christ is pure, proceeds to observe, in the verse containing our text, that the commission of sin is a trasgression of the law ; and that Christ came to take away sin, and put an end to transgression. He would thence, lead us to infer, that no one can safely indulge the hope of pardon, whose heart is not fully set in him to seek an entire conformity to the requisitions of that law, which it was the great end of Christ's death to magnify and render honourable.

We might, in accordance with the connexion of the text, call your attention to the obligations Christians are under, to observe the law as a rule of life and manners ; and press the necessity of such observance, as furnishing evidence of a gracious estate, and as indispensable to the indulgence of a well founded hope : But we would rather consider it in the light

of a distinct proposition, and would invite your attention to this single question.

WHY IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW, SIN ?

The answer to this question may be given in the language of an inspired writer—Because “ *The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*”

We remark that the law is holy—

1. In its nature. It is like its holy Author, of whose moral excellency it is both the transcript, and the exhibition.

The holiness of the law qualifies its character of justness, and goodness. It is holy in its entire nature, as it regards its requisitions, its penalties, and tendencies.

The moral principles of the law, are founded in the nature of the infinite God, and the relations that subsist between him, and the moral universe. The perfection, and moral purity that lie in the infinite Author of our being, are exhibited, and set forth in his holy law. It constitutes that grand rule of right, growing out of his own glorious perfections and attributes, that is binding on every being in heaven, on earth, and in hell. Being an exhibition of God, it is like God ; and he loves his law, as he loves himself. The holiness of the law, is God's holiness exhibited. Hence a contempt of the law, is a contempt of the holiness of God. Opposition to the law, is as direct opposition to God, as it is possible for creatures to manifest.

God shows his moral loveliness in his law. Here we see, not an arbitrary *expression* of the Divine *will*, but an *exhibition* of the Divine *Being*. The great moral principles of the

law, are not what they are, merely, because God *determined* they should be so, but because God *is*, what he *is*; and the law could not be otherwise than it is, but as God ceases to be what HE is.

We thence see, that the death of Christ could no more have been designed, to lessen the demands of the law on the sinner, so as to nullify, in the least degree, his obligation to comply, most strictly, with all that the law requires, than it could have been designed, to change the eternal, and unchangeable nature of God. We may see also, that those who suppose the death of Christ to have released them, in any measure, from the demands of the law, and who thence think heaven an object of easy attainment, because God requires less of them under the gospel, than he required under the law, are in a great and dangerous error.

But the law is holy, not only, as partaking of, and exhibiting the moral purity and excellency of the Divine nature, but also, in the nature of its *requirements*.

If the law, in all the features of it, is as unchangeable as its eternal Author, it must, in all its *requirements*, be like its Author. Universal, and perfect holiness, must be the great end of all its precepts. The supreme design and end of the law, is to make men like God; to produce in them a perfect conformity to the moral image of their Creator; that, by becoming partakers of the Divine nature, they may become qualified for the holy and happy society of heaven, and proper objects of the Divine complacency. Even the partial sanctification which the children of God experience in this world, would

give them no good ground to hope for salvation, if it were not that Jesus Christ "*is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.*" He having "*magnified the law, and rendered it honourable,*" God can now, consistently with his regard towards his own character, and the law which is an exhibition of it, be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. And, it is because all the ends of the law are perfectly answered, by the obedience and death of Christ, and for this reason only, that God can now save the believing sinner, and look with a fatherly tenderness and complacency on those who are the subjects of a partial sanctification only.

Hence, when we contemplate, in its proper scriptural light, the great scheme of mercy, it is so far from letting down the law, in the holiness and strictness of its requirements, that we see God's love towards the law, and his determination to maintain its authority, and enforce its demands, set forth, and illustrated, in a manner, calculated to put an honour upon it, and add a dignity and lustre to it, that will to eternity command the admiration, and engage the confidence and esteem of all holy beings in the universe.

Jesus Christ will bring many sons and daughters to glory, not in contrariety to the law, but in perfect accordance with it. "*The righteousness of the law,*" that is, the righteousness which the law requires, as the condition of life, "*is fulfilled*" in all those "*who are in Christ Jesus,*" "*and who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

Hence, through the wonderful, and infinitely glorious scheme of saving mercy by Jesus Christ, we see the holiness



of the law, both in its requirements, and penalties, set forth, and illustrated, in a light, that would otherwise never have been discovered. Without the gracious interposition of Jesus Christ, all that would ever have been seen of the holiness, or moral purity of the law, would have been set forth in the inflictions of its penalty on transgressors ; and in the despairing agonies of damned spirits, we should have learned, that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good ; but this great truth is taught us now, in the death groans, and blood of the Victim of Calvary, and in the song of mercy, which the children of redemption sing, in both worlds.

“ Here the whole Deity is seen,  
Nor dares a creature guess,  
Which of his glories brightest shine,  
The justice, or the grace.”

But—

2. The law is *just*, as well as holy. It is holy in the nature of its requirements, and as it stands related to God, and *exhibits* his holiness. It is *just*, because it is adapted, in all respects, to the nature, and relations of being. It imposes responsibilities upon creatures that arise from the nature of their endowments, and from the relations they sustain to God, and their fellow beings.

We are all capable of perceiving, and feeling, that we are under great and sole obligations to God. The law defines the nature of these obligations, and teaches us their extent. It is summarily comprehended in this—“ *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.*” He is the Lord ; the Sovereign of the Universe. He is thy God. He made you what you

are. He gave you what you have. He holds your future eternal destiny in his hands. He has manifested towards you, in all he has done, the most kind and compassionate feelings. He formed you capable of high and refined social, moral, and intellectual enjoyment. And that he might show you the fulness of his mercy, and the boundless extent of his benevolence, he has provided a Saviour, to deliver you from the ruin, and curse of the apostacy, putting, so to speak, your destiny into your own hands for eternity. Under the relation of Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer, you are called to contemplate him. These tender, endearing, and solemn relations, stand necessarily connected with their respective responsibilities. The law demands of you, such a course of conduct, as is adapted to the nature of these relations. In this the law is just ; and it is quite impossible, for the reflecting mind, not to feel the righteousness of its claims. The law is just, in that it requires you to treat the glorious God, in the respective relations, that subsist between him, and yourselves, as you ought to treat him. You are dependent on him, in the most absolute sense, every moment of your life. You live, because he lets you live. You enjoy, because he has not filled your bodies with pain, nor beset your souls with his terrors. You prosper, because his hand of bounty has been opened upon you. You are the subjects of a gracious probation, because he has sent Jesus Christ into the world to die for you. You hear of Christ, because God gave you birth in a land of Bibles, and of Sabbaths. When you come to die, it will be God that will take away your breath. If you rise to

heaven, it will be by the richness, and power of his grace. If you sink to hell, his arm of vengeance will pursue you to the lowest pit. Look at your relations, my dear friends, and ask, what are your obligations to the great Almighty God? The law is just, in that it demands, that you should live in accordance with these obligations.

But the law is just, also, in that it contemplates the obligations that arise from the relations we sustain to our fellow men.

Under this aspect of our responsibilities, we have also a summary of what it requires, and it is this, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" We are formed for society. There are obligations that arise from the very nature, and structure of social, civil, and political combinations. There is a grand rule of right to regulate all the intercourses of mankind, whether in their individual, or associated and political capacity; and our Lord Jesus Christ has projected a principle, that covers the whole area, both of natural, and arbitrary association, and in its practical application, runs parallel with the eternity of our being. "*Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.*"

Now the law is just, in that it demands that every man should respect the rights of others; and in that it forbids our doing, what may tend in any way, to the injury of society.

The law teaches us, that we live for others, as well as for ourselves; and that we are bound to live for ourselves, only, in such a manner, that others may be benefitted. That man has never had any just views of the end of his being, who has

not both felt, and acknowledged, the force of this obligation.

Our benevolent Creator takes a deep and unsuspended interest in the happiness of his creatures ; and he has manifested his benevolence, as much, in regulating the conduct of his creatures towards each other, by those laws that are adapted to their social natures, and to the various relations of the present life, as by those, that respect our individual responsibilities to himself, and stand connected with the future, and interminable destiny of our being.

Men are capable of trespassing upon the rights of others, in forms that cannot be brought under the cognizance of human laws. In all such cases, particularly, God has set himself up in the eye of the universe, as the judge and avenger. He will plead the cause of the widow, and the fatherless, and vindicate the rights of the oppressed. He will eventually, bring up the long arrear of vengeance, against those who have indulged the worst passions of their nature towards their fellow men. On that day, when he shall show to all intelligent beings, that his law is holy, and just, what trembling, what paleness, what horror of soul, will thousands, and millions feel, who, in this world, lived in carelessness, and gayety, and wealth, and splendour, and who despised the cause, both of God, and his people ? Then he will show, that his law is just in its *penal sanctions*, as well as its *precepts*. He is able to graduate, with infinite exactness, by the standard of eternal right, both crime, and its punishment. Nor will there be any secret place, throughout the vast dominions of their Maker, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves. Is he

capable of measuring the *demerits* of sin ? He both can, and will inflict such *penalties* as are adapted to the nature of transgression, and its multiform, and endless tendencies, with regard to the relations, and interests of the moral universe. Every transgression and disobedience shall receive a recompence of reward, which the infinitely wise, and holy, and righteous moral Governour shall determine to be just. And his holy, and just law, constituting, as it does, the grand bond of union to the intelligent creation, shall form the basis of his procedure, on the great day of final adjudication.

Men may not be prepared *now*, to acknowledge that they perceive the fitness of the penal sanctions of the law, to the transgression of it ; and they may be ready, in a thousand ways, to persuade themselves that so great evils as are threatened, cannot, in strict justice, be inflicted : But their difficulties arise from their very limited and partial views of the evil nature, and dreadful tendencies of transgression ; and from their very imperfect, not to say inconsistent views of the character of God. But when they shall come into the eternal world, their views of both will be essentially changed. They will then see, that all sin was against God ; whether it were a disrespect to his authority, or a violation of those responsibilities, that grow out of their relations to their fellow men. And they will there learn, that it is an evil, and a bitter thing, to sin against God. It is not to be expected, that in this world men should acknowledge the law just in its penalties ; but in the light of eternity, God will show all his enemies, that he is just in judging, and righteous in condemning. O, let us all

remember, "*that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"

3. The law being holy, and just, in settling the great principles of duty towards God, and towards man, according to the nature, and relations of each, must, necessarily, lead in its tendencies, to the promotion of the highest happiness and glory, both of created, and uncreated being ; and thence it is *good*, as well as *holy*, and *just*.

We perceive, that the great principles of action, which the law inculcates, contemplate the highest good of being, in that they regard, and are designed to secure, the individual, and combined rights, and interests of the moral universe, and assign to every being, throughout the vast empire of the Eternal, his appropriate place. They accord to God the throne of sovereignty, and holiness, and glory ; and demand of all creatures, in every world, submission to his will. They bind man to man, earth to heaven, and heaven and earth to the mighty Maker of all. How holy, and just, and good is that law, the direct and invariable tendency of which, is to assimilate the creature to his Creator, in holiness, and felicity, and to prostrate a dependent universe, in voluntary and joyful submission, before his eternal throne.

If then, such are the nature and tendencies of the law ; if it requires such a course of action and moral feeling, as is in accordance with the attributes and relations of being ; if it finds its basis in those great principles, which, whilst they look supremely at the greatest good of the universe, protect, and secure the individual rights, and interests of created and



uncreated intelligences, it is not difficult to see, that the transgression of the law is sin.

### INFERENCES.

1. We see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is direct opposition, and hostility to the infinitely blessed God, in all the attributes of his being, and in all the operations of his wisdom and benevolence. It is a disruption, both of the relations that subsist between the beings that God has created, and God himself; and a contempt, also, of all the responsibilities that grow out of these relations. It aims to rob God of his glory, and Christ of his reward. It directs its influence against the purity and felicity of heaven. It increases the misery of the damned, as it peoples hell with rebellious subjects, and multiplies the number of the lost souls of men. It impeaches the rectitude of the divine government, and prostrates the glory of the Eternal, at the feet of his rebellious subjects. It directs its energies against his throne, and would plant the standard of revolt upon the very battlements of heaven. It would annihilate the order and harmony of universal nature, and mingle in one vast pile of desolation and ruin, God, and his throne, and the combined glory of his holy kingdom.

But the sinfulness of sin appears great, exceeding the power of conception, when we view it, as directing its energies against the great scheme of gracious providential accomplishment. Here we contemplate it, as dire hostility to that system of grace, through Jesus Christ, in which God has come out to the view of men and angels, in the fulness of his glory,

and in the infinitude of his benevolence and mercy. In sight of the Cross—in hearing of the agonies of the Victim that hung upon it, and bled, and died, that men might live, sin rages, and offers its insults and derision, in the very face of mercy, bending with tearful intreaty, over the guilty and ruined subjects of the FALL.

2. We see the presumptuous daring of sin. It is not awed, by the purity and majesty of God, nor appalled, by the terrors of his wrath. It is not awakened to admiration, by beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, nor melted into submission, by the compassionate tenderness, nor the condescension and benevolence of a dying Saviour. It puts forth a ruthless hand against the Almighty, to blot out the glory of heaven, and annihilate the blessedness of its inhabitants. Sinners do their offences unblushingly under the very eye of the Eternal. Although they know that God is almighty, they dare to lift their arm against him, and provoke his wrath. I know that there are few sinners, who are sensible of this ; and they may even tremble to think that they have set themselves in array against God ; but such is, nevertheless, the fact. Sin has become so familiar to them, that they cease to look at its odious nature, and they *will* not give themselves *time* to contemplate it, in all its tendencies, upon the character and government of God, and upon the highest interests, of the innumerable subjects of his moral kingdom.

Finally—Let me beseech those of you, my dear friends, who are this day in your sins, to pause and reflect. You have, all your life long, passed by your Maker, who, with infinite

right, demands of you the first tribute of respect and submission.

And for what is it, that you have put this indignity upon God, and heaven, and the holy universe ? For the gratification of some guilty passion of your dying nature. You lavish all your powers upon the creature that God gave you, and do so, whilst in that very creature, you receive solemn and constant notices of the presence of the mighty Giver, and of your absolute dependence on him for a capacity to enjoy those forbidden pleasures, that make you the willing slaves of sin. You voluntarily barter the soul, eternity, and heaven, for a moment of sinful gratification, which, when gone, may be your last, and let in upon you the wonders of the future world. How soon the curtain will drop that obstructs your vision, and shuts out from your view, the unutterable glory, or the abysses of wo, God, who has your life in his hand, only, can know. You are walking amidst snares and death every day. In the morning you have no certainty that you shall ever see the evening ; and you know not, but that the night will close up your accounts with the world, and be succeeded by no morning. Whilst this is solemnly true, with respect to every one of us, it is, at the same time true, that every step we take, is carrying us forward, towards the vision and enjoyment of God, or leading our way downward, to those realms of night, where “ hell and horror reign.” One by one, of my beloved auditors will drop into the grave, and each, in turn, experience in the favour, or the frowns of God, all that is lovely in heaven, or all that is dreadful in hell.



## SERMON XVIIII.

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“*He that is of God, heareth God’s words ; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*”      JOHN viii, 47.

MEN, in their intercourse with each other, and in their feelings towards God, will act in accordance with their religious opinions. If they have adopted loose moral sentiments, they will not be very scrupulous, and exact, in their deportment in society. If their religion consists, principally, in matters of form and ceremony, they will know little of those feelings of reverence towards God, and of the joy that springs from contemplating the glorious perfection and purity of his nature, as well as the wisdom, and benevolence of his operations, that are peculiar to those, who love to think upon his name, and his works, and his ways ; and whose practical piety results, from the adoption and belief of those high and interesting truths respecting God, that clothe him with his true character, and accord to him the undivided, and eternal sovereignty of the universe.

The truth of these remarks is sustained, by what the Saviour says, of the opinions and conduct of the Jews, in our

context. They claimed to have God to their father, and from the fact, that they deemed all their religion to consist in their external covenant relation, and in the performance of external rites, they had nothing of that spirituality of religion, in which, alone, its essence consists. They were opposed to all the great truths taught by the Saviour, respecting the character of God, and the methods of his pardoning mercy. Their professed regard for God, as their Father, to the contrary notwithstanding, they could not endure the only begotten of the Father, although his claim to be the Messiah was confirmed by the broad seal of heaven.

Christ very plainly told them, that they did not believe him, because he told them the truth. Their enmity was against the great doctrines which he taught—“*Which of you,*” said he, “*convinceth me of sin? and if I say the truth, why do you not believe me?*” The answer to this inquiry is given in the text—“*He that is of God, heareth God’s words; ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God.*”

It is the affirmation contained in the text, and not the conclusion, to which I design, at this time, to call your attention. In the first clause of the text, the Saviour projects this great principle—That, “*He that is of God, heareth God’s words.*” The last clause of the text is an inference from this principle, “*Ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God.*”

In further prosecuting our subject, we would invite your attention to the following proposition—

A CORDIAL BELIEF OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL, IS  
THE BEST EVIDENCE OF LOVE TO GOD.



He that is of God, belongs to God, is born of God, or born from above, is a choice vessel of mercy, a disciple of Christ, a son by adoption, and an heir of glory. Hence, he cannot fail to be under the influence of all those feelings that are peculiar to one of such high privilege and distinction. He looks with tender interest towards his expected inheritance. He feels the spirit of adoption. He labours to give full proof of his discipleship. He carries continually upon his mind, a solemn, and affecting sense of his obligations, to the distinguishing grace of his heavenly Father. Under the impulse of such feelings, he cannot fail to exercise supreme delight in God, and the most unreserved confidence, in all that he has revealed of himself.

He that is of God, esteems him as his friend ; takes delight in his character ; loves to see him honoured ; and will labour to contribute, all in his power, to promote his glory. He will believe what God has revealed. and practice what God has required. His active obedience will be founded on a knowledge and belief of the great doctrines God has taught in the Bible. He will hear God's words. He will cordially *believe* every thing that God presents as an object of faith, and because he *believes*, he will *do*, every thing that God has enjoined for the regulation of his conduct.

By the doctrines of the gospel, we understand, those great truths which God has revealed respecting himself, and his government, and respecting the responsibilities and destiny of his creatures.

Now, in all that God has declared about himself, the sanctified soul delights. He does not hesitate, and reason with himself, and ask, whether he can comprehend, and understand, all that God has declared. He only inquires—Is it the Lord that speaks ? And an affirmative answer, settles all his doubts, and chases away all his fears. He feels, that, not only his own, but that the safety and happiness of the universe, also, lies in God's *being*, what he *declares* himself to be, and in his *doing*, what he has *said* he *will do*.

It must appear very evident, that *he* cannot claim to be of God, let his life be what it may, who rejects, and hates, those great truths respecting his being and government, which God has declared essential to the moral perfection and glory of his nature. *That* man cannot claim to have his obedience founded on love to God, who hates, what God has affirmed to be true respecting himself : And thence, it must appear obvious, that *he*, who builds his hope of divine favour, upon acts of external obedience, be they never so uniform, whilst yet, he has no regard for those great doctrines that exhibit God, and the methods of his administration, has reason to fear, from this very indifference, that the light of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, has never been let in upon his soul.

It is always, an afflicting indication of unsoundness in the faith, to hear those, who profess to love Christ, speaking lightly of doctrinal discussions, and uniformly demanding, what are termed, practical discourses. It is seriously to be apprehended, that persons of this description are afraid to look at

themselves, in the light of naked truth ; and that, in fact, their opposition is to truth itself, and is not to be ascribed to their doubts of the utility of exhibiting those great and important doctrines that are calculated to awaken the hostility of the carnal mind.

As it is in the doctrines of the gospel, only, that we can learn the true character of God, I am almost prepared to say, that indifference towards them, betrays a secret hostility to his true character. How can a man love God, if he does not see something lovely in him ? And how can he learn whether God *is lovely*, without knowing something of his character, and attributes ? And how can he learn any thing of these, but from God himself ? And where shall he go for instruction, but to that revelation, to which God has affixed his own seal of authenticity ? And how can he hope that the love of God has been shed abroad in his heart, when he takes no pleasure in looking at the glorious exhibitions God has made of his perfections, in his word, in his works, and in his ways ? The good man's glorying is in God only ; and it will remain in God, during the eternity of his being. He never feels so well, in *this world*, as when he is absorbed in God, and loses sight of himself ; and when he shall come to look upon holiness and sin, in the light of *eternity*, and upon himself as a sinner saved by grace, he will think infinitely less of himself, than is possible to him, in the most exalted exercise of gracious affections in the present life.

It should seem, then, impossible, that *he* can hope to be of God, who is even *indifferent* with regard to those great and

important doctrines of the gospel, that clothe God with a character of infinite perfection, and excellency, and glory.

But the text declares that those who *are* of God, *will* hear God's words. Suppose we, that to hear God's words, imports simply, that they will do his commandments meaning thereby, that they will render external obedience ; this will not help us away from the obligation we are under to give God our hearts, to love him with all the heart, to believe that he *is*, and that he is the *rewarder* of all those who diligently seek him.

Besides, what is the motive to external obedience ? Can it be any thing else, than a cordial attachment to God, founded upon something which we see, or think we see, in his character ? Every external expression of submission and obedience to God, that does not spring from sincere love of heart towards him, is but the mockery of lip service, and cannot fail to be offensive to him. Every acceptable expression of devotion to God, has its source, uniformly, in love. But to love him, it is necessary that we have a knowledge of his character. This knowledge can be acquired, only, by becoming acquainted with those great truths, respecting himself, which God has revealed. In these truths, we find that system of doctrine, to which God requires the cordial, and unreserved confidence, and submission of our hearts. It is here, only, that we learn what God is, and what that is, in his character, and in his ways, which he requires us to love. It is by this means, only, that we can determine, that we love the true God, and that our religion is genuine.

Let us then distinctly understand—

1. That if our love towards God arises from false notions of his character, we have nothing to distinguish us from his enemies.

All sinners take pleasure in the God of their own forming. He, whose love is sincere and genuine, however, takes pleasure in the God of the Bible. He believes God on his word; and delights in contemplating him, as being, all that he has declared himself to be. He has no desire, like sinners, to clothe him with a character, less offensive, than that, with which he has been pleased in his word to declare himself invested. The uniform and universal experience of the human family affords most clear and decisive evidence, that men do, naturally, hate the true character of God, as revealed in the Bible: And if we find ourselves afraid to look at the character of God, and the distinguishing features of his own moral administration, it is an indication of no doubtful import, that we have never discovered that glory and excellency, either in our Eternal King, or his ways, the knowledge and belief of which, thrills the bosoms of angels, and awakens the gratitude, and inspires the song of the self-despairing sinner, when he finds the last, and only resting place of his sinking soul, in the great truth revealed, that there is with God, an election according to grace.

We remark—

2. That the character of God is unchangeable: And whatever, in the future stages of our existence, we may discover that character to be, one thing is certain, that to be *happy* in

God, we must be pleased with his character. But what, in his word, he has revealed himself to be, he will always be. There will be no change in *him*. Our views of him may become more enlarged, distinct, and impressive : But it is equally true now, as it will be, in any stage of our future being, that to enjoy God, we must be pleased with his character, as he has exhibited it to us in his word : And this is the clearest and most satisfactory evidence we can have, of decipleship to Jesus Christ.

“What man is to *believe* concerning God, and what *duty* God requires of man,” can be learned fully, from the Bible only. If the Bible is the revelation of God’s will to man, we must suppose, that what God has revealed about himself is true, and not false. And if true, then important, also, to be believed, most fully, and unequivocally, by his creatures.

God has revealed nothing concerning himself, or his creatures, and their obligations, and destiny, which, as the wise, righteous, and benevolent moral Governour, he did not deem important.

To set a light value, upon the doctrines of the gospel, therefore, much more, to disregard and oppose them, is setting up our judgement, against the wisdom, and the actual accomplishments of the infinite God ; and betrays a want of that high respect, and solemn reverence for the revelation from heaven, that cannot fail to possess the heart of enlightened and fervent piety.

Thence we remark—



3. That if we do not believe what God has said of himself, we can know nothing of him. We have no means of knowing him to be, something different from what he has declared himself to be, as we cannot know what he *is*, but by what he has *revealed* of himself. If, therefore, we do not believe the great truths he has revealed about himself, and about creatures, and eternity, and heaven, and hell, it is evident, that we are not of God ; and hence, a cordial, and tender belief of the great doctrines of the gospel, as it is the only basis of practical obedience, is also the most clear, and soul sustaining evidence, of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### REMARKS.

1. If wicked men clothe God with an entire character, with which they are pleased, we may be assured, that it is not his true character. They, only, that *are of God*, hear his words ; wicked men are not of God, and therefore, will not hear them. They may attain to very high intellectual views of the perfections, and works of the Deity, and speak largely upon his wisdom, and benevolence, and power ; but when they contemplate him, as the moral Governour, and look at their own relations, and responsibilities, they defile the purity, and debase the glory of his moral character, by ascribing to him such principles of government, as break down all distinction between right and wrong, and holiness and sin.

Their hearts being unchanged, they are under the influence of totally selfish affections ; and they will never adopt such views of God, as will be in discordance with their selfishness, until their hearts are changed by the grace of God,

and they are ready to submit unqualifiedly, to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, in the word.

Whatever views sinners may form of the character of God, as moral Governour, then, are certainly false views. He is not such a God as they imagine. He, whom they think they worship, is the God of their own perverse will, and their worship is nothing but will-worship, a submission to the God of their own corruptions.

Forming wrong views of the character of God, their notions of doctrine are of course wrong. Their views of him, are their doctrines of him : And thence, whatever doctrines sinners adopt with regard to God and his government, and their own relations, and responsibilities, are of course, false doctrines.

The natural heart never embraces the doctrines of grace. They are directly against the whole current of its feelings. Whatever sinners may believe, therefore, we know that they do not believe the truth. They may speculatively adopt some truth, through an entire indifference as it regards its influence on them, personally, in forming their moral character for eternity ; but let them look at truth, in all its connexions, relations, and results, and they will hate it supremely ; and will go about, in the wicked devices of their hearts, to persuade themselves into such views of doctrine, as are entirely congenial with their corruptions.

There, surely, can be nothing true, in that scheme of doctrines, which comes from a heart at total enmity with the truth which God has revealed from heaven.

Now, my dear impenitent friends, I ask you, tenderly, do you believe that your hearts are right with God? And that you are prepared to meet your Judge? I doubt not, that very many of you will have the candour to answer, No. Then let me tell you, whatever those sentiments may be, on which you build your hope of present safety, or of future amendment, they surely are not of God; and therefore, your case, is a case of exceeding guilt, and imminent danger. The hopes on which you rely are an abhorrence to God, because, during every moment of your reliance on them, you turn the truth of God into a lie, and impeach the purity, and righteousness of your Maker. The Lord Jesus Christ has declared that you “*therefore, do not hear,*” that is, believe and obey, “*the words of God—because you are not of God.*” Your heart is not in love with God, and his truth; and thence, all your views and feelings are in direct contrariety, to that Almighty Being, who alone can save you from endless ruin.

2. We see from our subject, the importance of doctrinal knowledge, to the great purpose of self examination. Through the deceitfulness and perversity of the human heart, we find a proneness in our common nature, to adapt all our duties, as well as our employments, to the prevailing bent and inclination of the mind. Men love to have every thing to suit their own taste. They are more pleased with those ideas of God, that make him, altogether, such an one as themselves, than with the clearest exhibition he has ever given of his true character. Hence it is, that false notions of the character of

God are so natural to men. But going to eternity with such notions of God, they must perish.

The character of God is so directly opposite to the character of man, that in exhibiting himself, God awakens in the human mind, a spirit of hostility ; and under the influence of this spirit, sinners go about forming a God after their own imagination, and hate, with all their hearts, the God of the Bible.

How can we know for ourselves, that this is not our case, but by a close examination and trial of our hearts, under the light of those great truths, which clothe the Almighty with supreme honour, and ascribe to him the sovereign, and universal control of being ? We know that the doctrines of the Bible are very trying to men of carnal minds ; and that as they cannot deny the being of a God, they will, nevertheless, invest him with such a character as is pleasing to them ; and having done this, they are *prepared* to look, with great complacency, upon the workmanship of their own hands.

But it is delight in the God of the Bible, alone, that can safely be relied on, as evidence of our union to Jesus Christ. We cannot know, however, that our hearts are pleased with the God of the Bible, so long as we remain ignorant of his character. Hence the importance of being acquainted with the great doctrines of the gospel, that we may try our hearts in the light of revealed truth, and ascertain, whether we love, or hate, the true God, the God of the Bible.

3. We may also see, thence, how important it is, that the ministers of Christ should preach the whole truth ; and par-

ticularly, that they should labour to exhibit, illustrate, and enforce, by all the means in their power, those doctrines of the gospel, that are peculiarly offensive to the carnal mind. These doctrines must be believed by sinners, or they cannot be saved. They will not be the more likely to believe them, because they are kept out of sight ; and if they are ever brought to *profess* submission to God, without having respect to these doctrines, in some shape or other, we may be assured, both that their professed submission is a delusion, and that the means by which they have been brought to it, are like the daubings of untempered mortar.

To love God, whilst yet, we are both ignorant of those great truths that are the exhibition and evidence of his loveliness and glory, and also opposed to them, is utterly impossible : And a disappointment, most awful, in prospect, not only, but most agonizing, in its reality, also, will be experienced by those, who have formed low, and light views of the moral grandeur and glory of God, when the last trumpet shall announce the opening of the judgement scene upon the universe.

God will maintain himself upon the throne of worlds ; and he demands the undisputed, and unrivalled submission, and affection of the hearts of his creatures. But sinners are unwilling to accord either to him.

Whatever else they may do, or be, then, they cannot be Christ's disciples, and obey his commands, so long as they are unwilling, without any condition, to cast themselves upon the sovereign and unmerited mercy of their eternal King. This they will never be brought to do, in the manner which God

requires, and which alone can be safe for them, until they are brought to see, and feel, that their destruction is as certain, if God does not stretch out his sovereign arm to save them, as if they were already in the pit of wo. Nor is there any thing that can so readily bring them, operating in the way of means, to see and feel this, as the exhibition of the character, perfections, and government of God. It is with God's character and ways, that they are at enmity ; nor will a sweet and heavenly peace ever be concluded between God and their souls, until they are brought, most unreservedly, to submit to the disposal of his sovereignty.

There is a soul destroying fallacy, in the sentiment, but too common, alas, even among those who profess to love both God, and the offensive doctrines of the gospel, that it is imprudent, and unadvised, to exhibit these doctrines, and press them home upon sinners. I apprehend satan has never employed a more successful instrument than this, to multiply the subjects of his dark empire, and to bring ruin and death eternal upon the souls of men.

4. We may see then, finally, that there is no hope for sinners, but as they are brought to the cordial and affectionate belief of those truths, which are offensive to their carnal hearts.

The great point to be determined, is, whether God, or they shall submit. And whilst they are at *variance* with their Maker, on this point, they yet know, that he alone can save them. But, can they hope that he will save them, when they withhold from him, his rightful authority, and would disrobe



him of those distinguishing perfections and attributes, both of his nature, and government, that maintain the purity of his character, the majesty of his throne, and the glory of his reign?

No, my dear impenitent friends, you have no hope but in God. If he leaves you to your own chosen way, you will as surely be lost, as if you were now lifting up your eyes in torment. The enemy with whom you have to contend is the Lord God of hosts. He is mighty in battle. If you resist to the last, you will be overthrown, with a dreadful overthrow. But God is waiting to be gracious. He is yet, even to-day, in the place, and on the throne of mercy. He has given a name, as the medium of our salvation, that is precious to all heaven. Jesus Christ, is *his* well beloved, and *our* Saviour. How often have we listened to the song of angels, announcing his birth to the peaceful shepherds on the star-lighted plains of Bethlehem. Born to be the hope of Israel, and the Saviour of the world, he is carrying on, by the agency of the Eternal Spirit, the great work of saving sinners. But remember, I entreat you, that the accomplishments of his grace, will end with your season of probation; and that if you die without an interest in Christ, henceforward, in the prison of your wo, not a moment of ease shall light upon the eternity of your being.



## SERMON XIX.

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*“ So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*

ISAIAH lv, 11.

WHEN God sends the rain and the snow upon the earth, it is not, merely, to make an exhibition of his power and wisdom to the children of men, without accomplishing any other valuable purpose, by means of these natural agents. When he created man, he designed the earth as the place of his abode, and the means of his subsistence. He orders the changes of the seasons, and the varieties of weather, with a view to render the earth fruitful, that it might *“ give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.”* It is to accomplish his purpose, in the original creation of the earth, that, under his direction, *“ the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud.”*

Now, as he uses these natural agents, to fulfil his designs with regard to the natural world, and as no other reason

can be assigned for their producing the effects they do, than the purpose of God that it should be so ; so also, has he purposes to accomplish in the moral world, through the instrumentality of means adapted to the proposed end. The connexion, between the means, and the end, is as infallible and fixed in the one case, as in the other ; and in both, for the same reason, because, it is the purpose and pleasure of God, that it should be so.

As he designed that the rain, and the snow, and the changes of the seasons, should make the earth fruitful, and yield her increase, so does he design, by the instrumentality of his *Word*, to accomplish the good pleasure of his will in the moral world.

To illustrate and enforce this truth, we remark—

1. That in every manifestation of himself, God has a fixed and settled plan, or purpose in view, which he designs to accomplish. He has purposed that the earth shall yield her increase, for the comfort and sustenance of man. To accomplish this purpose, he sends down the rain, and the snow from heaven, and orders the varieties of the seasons. When he made man, he made him for his own glory. This was his purpose. To accomplish this purpose, he extends towards him a moral culture, or the use of means, adapted to his condition, and endowments. It is to accomplish his purpose, in the creation, of moral agents, that he employs means. His word is the instrument he has selected for this end, and he has declared that it shall not return unto him void.

2. The supreme and ultimate end, upon which all God's purposes terminate, is his own glory. This must, of necessity, be so, when we reflect, that before he spoke creation into being, he existed alone. There was nothing out of himself to move him to act, nor any end existing, towards which he should direct his actions, to operate as a motive to action. His own glory, therefore, must have been the grand and ultimate end of his works.

In making his own glory the grand object, we see the richest and most exalted display of benevolence and wisdom. No object could, possibly, so immediately, and completely involve and absorb the highest interests of the universe. On God all creatures depend. His happiness and glory is essential to their happiness and being.

But further, God is an infinitely wise and benevolent being. His purposes, therefore, must be like himself, infinitely wise and benevolent. It would be an impeachment of his character, and a virtual denial of his infinite perfection, to suppose, that his purposes fall short of the highest happiness possible to the universe. But that his own glory is the highest happiness of the universe, must appear very plain, from the fact, that if the highest happiness of the universe consisted in something else, his glory would be subordinate, which would, not only, imply imperfection in God, but also, that the highest happiness of being was derived from some other source than the mighty Maker of all. The Scriptures represent the Divine Being, as wise in counsel, and benevolent in purpose ; and directing all things for his own glory—" *He hath made all*

*things for himself."* "And for his pleasure they are and were created." "He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, and wonderful in working." "He is the only wise God, seeing the end from the beginning," and employing the infinite energy of his high and holy perfections, to introduce into the moral system, as much holiness and happiness, as in his view, the highest good of the universe demands.

In Jesus Christ, who is "*the wisdom of God, and the power of God,*" we have a display of his benevolence that will command the adoration, and engage the song of all holy beings to eternity. The apostle Paul gives a very powerful and interesting view of God's infinite purpose of wisdom and benevolence, as displayed in the redemption scheme—"Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things in Christ; to the INTENT, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God."

3. The instrument which God has ordained, as the great and principal means of accomplishing his wise and benevolent purposes, is his WORD. His Word contains his revealed will. By this, he designs to accomplish, what are termed, his decrees, or secret will.

There is a peculiar beauty and fitness in the design, that God should employ his *revealed* will, which exhibits the rule of duty to creatures, as the instrument of accomplishing his



*eternal counsel*, or *purpose* respecting the *character* and *destiny* of creatures. His *revealed will* is adapted to the capacities and circumstances of those, for whose direction and government, it was intended. His *eternal purpose* or *decree* is adapted to his own infinite perfection and glory. There can be nothing, in the purposes or decrees of God, that could furnish a *rule of duty* to creatures, should they all be revealed. They all have respect to God himself, and to him only. They regard his own actions. They regard events, which God will bring about by his own agency ; and could never be improved by creatures, as the means of doing good, and imparting happiness, if they even knew them. What God has revealed in his word, however, *may* be improved by his creatures, as a directory to their duty, and as the means of happiness. This is adapted to the faculties of their being, and to their responsibilities as moral agents. Men have nothing to do with God's secret designs. They belong to himself. What he has *revealed* belongs to his creatures. It is infinite presumption for them to suppose, that such and such things *may* be in God's *decrees*, and that therefore, it is useless for them to pay any regard to the *known rules* of duty which he has presented to them. The same Being who has told us, that HE "works all things according to the counsel of his own will," has also, prescribed to man, *his* work. And it is no light business, for men to intermeddle with God's works. He is infinitely able to manage his own concerns, without their interference. He observes, and will eternally observe, his own appropriate province, and execute his eternal will, or secret

purposes in his own way ; and it is exceedingly fit and proper, that creatures should observe *their* province, and act in accordance with what God has *revealed*, as the rule of their duty. Could they know all God's secret purposes, this would not save them, if they neglected to do their duty, as prescribed in the sacred Scriptures. God has given us his Bible. as the instrument of effecting our salvation ; and we cannot, without wickedly attempting to pry into the secrets of his throne, make his *decrees* the reason for neglecting *known* and *commanded* duty. When he gave his word to man, he gave it for the twofold purpose of being a *rule* of *duty*, and an *instrument* by which he designed to accomplish his own *purposes* with regard to man. In the first department, as a rule of duty, the Bible, so to speak, belongs to man. In the second department, as an instrument by which God accomplishes his secret will, the Bible belongs to God. The use which God makes of it in this respect, is to subserve his own purposes ; and does not at all interfere with the use, he has commanded man to make of it. If he employs his own work, to accomplish his own designs, who shall complain ? Will any one assume the right to control God ? Or dictate to him what he shall do ? Is there any necessity, that we should do wrong, because God does right ? And shall we make his doing what he pleases with his own, without at all infringing upon our liberty as voluntary agents, a reason for our doing wrong ? It is hard to perceive how God can act at all, if he cannot seek his own glory, in that way, that to him appears best and right. And on what ground can we complain, if he

has not been pleased to let us into a knowledge of the reasons of his own conduct? He has set before us our duty, and the means of happiness. He has told us what we must do to be saved; and has most solemnly assured us, that if we will do what he has told us, we shall be saved. What more can we ask at the hand of our Maker? He has, moreover, forewarned us of our danger, and distinctly informed us, that if we refuse to comply with what he has required, we shall perish.

The language of the text, when compared with what the apostle says with regard to the effects of revealed truth, should awaken us to a serious sense of our situation, and lead us, very earnestly, to apply ourselves to the great work of securing our salvation—"For we are," says the apostle, "*a sweet savour unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one, we are a savour of life unto life, and to the other, a savour of death unto death.*" "*The word that goeth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*"

It appears that the word of God is pre-eminently, the instrument which he employs, in forming the characters of men for eternity; and in preparing things for the glorious display which he will make of his wisdom, and justice, and mercy, in the judgement scene, when he will settle the destinies of the intelligent universe, unalterably, and eternally.

The evidence of this is abundant from the Scriptures—"Is not my word like a fire saith the Lord?" "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.*" "*He*

*that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.*" "Thou hast magnified thy word, above all thy name." "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word of God is represented as the instrument of convincing, reproving, enlightening, sanctifying, judging, and condemning. Jesus Christ has said, "*The word that I have spoken unto him, the same shall judge him in the last day.*" It is a solemn truth, that the light which shines from heaven will be blessed to some, for their salvation, whilst to others, it will prove the means of aggravating their condemnation, and enhancing their wretchedness for ever.

#### INFERENCES.

1. If, in every thing, God has acted with a view to a fixed end, then, whatever has taken place, has formed a part of his plan or purpose. He has created all things to promote a certain design. Every intermediate step in the process, necessary to the end, must have been before him, and received the sanction of his will. It is his province, since both means and ends are dependent on himself, to determine the means by which he will accomplish his designs.

From the nature of his infinite perfections, we cannot but suppose, that God saw at one glance, with boundless comprehensive view, the best possible end of being, and the best possible means of accomplishing that end. We cannot, therefore, suppose, that he would under all the *circumstances* of its

existence, and in its *assigned* and *appropriate* place, should not be the best calculated to execute his infinitely wise and holy determinations. He has under his control, and has always had, all the agents, both in the natural and moral world ; and nothing *could*, at any time, have taken place, which he did not see wisest and best, in relation to all his purposes.

All the natural and moral evil there ever was, or will be in the universe, as well as all the holiness and happiness, must stand connected with his grand plan of government. And this is a view of the subject, that cannot fail to be peculiarly grateful to a pious mind. It is a matter, for which the holy universe will for ever bless God, that he has as direct a control over the volitions and actions of all wicked beings, as he has over those of holy beings : And that he is controlling the former, as well as the latter, in such a way, as to declare his richest and highest praise.

'Tis infinitely desirable that he should control the wicked, by an agency, as direct, positive, and efficient, as he does holy beings. If his eye were not fixed upon all the path of the wicked, and his hand did not place their steps, who can tell, what the result of their wicked conduct might not be ? But as it is, God holds them in his hands, and controls all their ways for his own glory.

On this point the Scriptures are remarkably explicit and full—" *I am the Lord that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone ; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself ; that frustratest the tokens of lyars, and maketh diviners mad ; that turneth wise men backward and maketh their*



*knowledge foolish."* " *I form the light and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil ; I, the Lord, do all these things : Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*" The Bible teaches us that God absolutely, directly and continually controls the wicked, as well as the righteous. He employs them in those departments of his moral government, for which he has fitted them by his invisible agency. How important is it, that sinners should feel this ; and that the righteous too, should know and acknowledge it.

This view of God's purposes and operations, brings him near to every one of us ; and attaches an incalculable importance to all our thoughts and ways. To God's wise and benevolent plan of administration, not a single movement of one of his creatures is a matter of indifference. The great and mighty events, and revolutions that take place in the natural world, and among the nations of the earth, are not more important, when viewed in conjunction with the great scheme of providential operations, than the seemingly, most indifferent actions of an obscure individual. How wonderful is that Being, who surveys immensity with a glance, and at the same instant, numbers the hairs of our head, and notices every sparrow that falls to the ground.

If God's purposes are infinitely wise and benevolent, then, the present system of things is the best of all possible systems.

If, to his infinitely perfect and comprehensive mind, that state of things which now exists, had not appeared, all things



considered, best calculated to promote his designs, he could, with infinite ease, have interposed, and hindered its existence. The fact that he has not done so, is evidence, that to his wise and benevolent mind it seemed best, on the whole, that things should be, as they are. What infinite wisdom and benevolence chooses, must be for the best. God can act none otherwise, than is best calculated, in his *own* view, to promote his own glory ; and as all the events that have ever taken place, have been directed by him, we must conclude, that in his judgement, their taking place was the most wise and happy method of developing his designs of wisdom and mercy to the intelligent universe. Will it be said then, that *sin* is *pleasing* to God, and thence, the more sin the better ? Might we not as well say, that *misery* is pleasing to God, because our world is full of it, and set ourselves to work, to multiply the sufferings and sorrows of our race ?

3. If God orders all things for the best, then, those who would take out of his hands the right of determining the existence of sin and its consequences, do actually prescribe limits to the prerogative of the Most High. They know not what they do. We doubt not their intentions may be good ; and that they act under an impression, that they are doing God service, and are saving his character from reproach : But we must be permitted to doubt, whether they take the best *method* to accomplish their object, and to exhibit the glory of *his* wisdom and benevolence.

It is very difficult to perceive, how an infinite Being, who has created all things with a view to a particular end, should

yet be so situated, with regard to the means necessary to promote that end, as that they should form no direct part of his plan, but be left to exist as a matter of bare permission, or chance. I say chance, because a permission that excludes positive decree, puts the whole system of means on the ground of mere contingency. It is equally difficult to perceive, how the will of an infinite being can be otherwise than efficient.

The impotency of human purposes, consists in an inability to control the means necessary to the end. But as both the means, and the end, lie equally in the purpose of God, and must, of necessity, according to the present constitution of things, God must create and control the one, by an agency, as direct and efficient, as he does the other. How can the Divine Being know, with respect to any given event, that is future, that it will come to pass? Does he know it, only, because he will permit creatures to act in a given way? Then what is it, that renders it certain, that they will act in a given way. For the certainty of the event must be established, before it can be foreknown. Who establishes this certainty? Is it God, by permission? But if the *certainty* depends on *permission*, then where is the difference between *permission*, and *decree*? If the *permission* renders it *certain*, the *decree* does no *more*. It will thence be seen, that all attempts to modify, or explain away, the plain common sense, as well as Bible doctrine, that God moves, by his efficient will, the whole system of moral agency, is but to darken counsel by words without knowledge.

4. If God is accomplishing, through the instrumentality of his word, his wise and holy purposes, then, opposition to him is exceedingly wicked. . .

The Bible asserts the sovereignty of God, and maintains, in the clearest manner, the doctrine of a particular, as well as universal providence. As an infinitely wise and good Being, he both created and governs all his creatures, and all their actions, with a design to promote his own glory. The happiness of the universe is identified with his glory. All the good possible to being, is derived from him. He alone is qualified to judge, what will best conduce to the glory of his name. To secure and accomplish his designs, it is necessary that all secondary causes, both physical and moral, through the unbounded range of immensity, should be under his entire and direct control.

Now, if God is directing the mighty energies of his nature, to promote his own glory, and if the good of the moral universe is so identified with his glory, that it is the foundation of all created happiness, then, those who feel opposed to the sovereign reign of God, feel opposed to the greatest good of the universe ; and are combined in a cause that is infinitely derogatory to their Maker, and ruinous in its tendencies to the happiness of being. What good man would be afraid to trust *his all* into the hands of his Creator, to order his destiny, both in time, and eternity ? Wicked men hate, and oppose the purposes of God, because, conscious of their guilt, and yet unwilling to repent of sin, and submit to God, they fear that in executing his purposes, God will destroy their souls. While

on the other hand, good men and angels delight in the sovereign reign of God, and the united hosts of heaven continually cry, " ALLELUIA, THE LORD GOD, OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH."

5. If, through the instrumentality of his word, God is promoting his glory, and this is the grand end of all his actions, then, we may learn something about the nature of gospel submission.

It appears from what has been said, that he has given us his holy word as one instrument, and as it regards this world, pre-eminently, the grand instrument of accomplishing his purposes. Now as the Bible is the great instrument by which his purposes are to be accomplished, and from which we learn the *existence* of his purposes, we see that there can be no genuine submission, but as the heart is willing, that whatever God has purposed in himself, should be done. What may lie in his purpose, or decree, any farther than the grand end, which he proposes to himself, is concerned, creatures do not, and cannot know, until the event declares it. They do know, however, that his glory is the supreme good of the universe ; that it is the good which he himself has chosen ; that he is infinitely wise and benevolent ; that he will do no injustice to any of his creatures ; and that he will treat all according to their real character. Hence there can be no true submission, but as we are willing, that whatever God may esteem most for his glory, either with respect to ourselves, or others, should be done ; and that the event should declare his will. It would be no hard thing to submit to God's purpose of making us happy eternally, if this purpose were revealed : But it

would be exceedingly hard to submit to his purpose of making us miserable, if *this* purpose were revealed. But as neither is, nor can be revealed, submission must consist in being willing, that whatever may lie in the purpose of God, respecting our future eternal destiny, should be done. He who sees his own character, and has a conviction of his deserts as a sinner, cannot fail to feel, that it would be just in God to show him no mercy. If he does not feel this, he does not accept the punishment of his iniquity. Submission precedes the hope of pardon. This is in accordance with the uniform experience of Christians. In this, there is an evident giving up of self, and a preference of God. There is an entire throwing of ourselves upon his sovereignty, and a virtual declaration, without knowing what the event may be, "*Let the will of the Lord be done.*" Such a feeling as this, is honourable to God. It gives him the throne. It acknowledges the rectitude and wisdom of all his ways. It is an expression of entire confidence in his holy and excellent administration. This makes man feel his dependence. It brings him to his creature place.—And is an unconditional surrendry of the destinies of the universe into the hands of a sovereign God.

6. If God's word shall accomplish his purpose of mercy, with regard to those whom he has determined to save through its instrumentality, may we not thence conclude, that it will have a most important and solemn effect, in forming the character, and deciding the destiny of his enemies. We are told that it will prove "*a savour of life unto life*" to some, and "*a savour of death unto death*" to others. Can we suppose that



God has no purpose to accomplish by his word on those who reject it ? And shall we say that he cannot, consistently with their voluntary agency, bring to pass the purposes of his will, through his word, with regard to them ? Then, in this instance, his word must return unto him void.

God has made all creatures for his own glory, "*yea even the wicked for the day of evil.*" He will get glory to himself in all the actions, both of holy, and sinful beings. And notwithstanding, he did from eternity determine all the events that ever should take place, both in the natural and moral world ; and that all should contribute to the promotion and accomplishment of his grand and glorious purposes, yet, sinners never say, that they are restrained from doing good, or impelled to do evil, through an irresistible impulse, forcing them *on*, contrary to their inclinations.

Now, if these things are so, my friends, you see that God can accomplish all the good pleasure of his will upon you, without at all impairing the freedom of your actions, or infringing, in any respect, on the grand principle of adjudication, upon which he will act, when he shall settle your eternal destiny, according to your real character. How solemn, then, and affecting your situation ! God made you for himself. He will promote his glory through your existence. You are in his world, and in his hands. You cannot get out of his world, nor break away from under his government. You must die, and go to stand before him ; and in that world, where all cavil, shall be put at an end, you will see and feel, that all his ways are just and true. Now, while you are occupying these



seats, God is operating his pleasure upon you, and through you. Whether *you* are willing, or not, *God* will not change his mind. His word, the grand instrument by which he brings to pass his decrees, is now doing its office, under the powerful agency of his eternal Spirit. It is now bearing, with a most solemn influence, upon your future eternal destiny ; and as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, is preparing you, for the decisions of that awful day, when it shall be known to the universe, to whom it has been "*the savour of life unto life,*" and to whom "*the savour of death unto death.*"

7. If God's word shall accomplish the purpose whereto he sent it, then, the people of God, and all holy beings have, strong ground of confidence and joy in him, in the darkest times. If they see no fruit of their labour, yet, they may be assured that God is working. He is directing his word, so as to accomplish his purpose, whether they see it, or not. It is secretly operating ; on some, as vessels of mercy, no doubt, who shall be declared in due time ; and on others, no doubt, as vessels of wrath.

Christians have no cause of despondency, in a season of darkness, if they are faithful. Consequences belong to God. Their care should be to their duty, and to their own souls. We have reason to fear, that they often forget their own hearts, whilst they profess to be deeply affected with the declension of the times ; and that they do not realize, that they themselves, contribute, by looking at the wrong objects, to that very declension which they deplore. Let every one look

well to his own heart, and he will find occasion of rejoicing in God, though the darkness about him, were like the darkness of Egypt.

God's purposes are ever before him. He will not suffer any thing to take place that he does not see necessary to his designs ; and he will secure the existence of every thing he deems necessary to this end. He will cause just as much holiness and happiness, and just as much sin and misery to exist in the universe, through the voluntary agency of his creatures, as he sees best to promote his own glory. He sold Joseph into Egypt, that he might show his love to Israel, and save much people alive. He raised up Pharaoh, that he might show forth his power, and fill the earth with the fear of his great name. And under his mighty decree, the Son of his love expired on Calvary, that, in the redemption scheme, he might pour upon the universe the effulgence of his glory. High as the heavens are above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. O, how safe and happy, to be in the hands of that infinite Being, *“ of whom, and through whom and to whom are all things, to whom be glory for ever !”*

## SERMON XX.

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*“ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”*

PHILIPPIANS ii, 4.

THE duty enjoined in this passage is rendered obvious, by consulting the succeeding verses. “ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*” Here, the example of Jesus Christ is presented to us, as a model for our imitation. He who was highly exalted, the glory of heaven, and the object of the Father’s care, influenced by the most pure and exalted benevolence undertook the work of man’s redemption.

The example of Christ then, is an example of benevolence; and when we are exhorted, “ *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,*” we are exhorted to the exercise of a spirit of disinterested benevolence.

Our text propounds the doctrine of disinterested benevolence ; and the example of Christ is presented to give force to the exhortation, and to illustrate the doctrine.

Let it be understood, that the text does not require us to neglect our own happiness, nor the improvement of those means that stand intimately allied with our present and future well being ; but, that while we are required to be attentive to our own interest, as creatures capable of happiness, we should not abstract ourselves from all regard to others, except as we may deem them necessary to our personal good ; but, with an expansive benevolence, like that which characterized our Lord and Saviour, should feel ourselves solemnly bound, to do all in our power, to promote the happiness of those, with whom, in the providence of God, we are associated.

Nor should we, in looking at this subject, limit our views to what man is capable of enjoying in this world ; but contemplating the never-dying principles of his nature ; looking at his capacity, as a being destined to eternity, and lying under responsibilities infinitely solemn and interesting—responsibilities on which the dearest interests of his soul are suspended, we should employ all the means with which God has furnished us, to promote his eternal well being.

It seems implied in the text, that we ought to feel the same kind of concern for the salvation of others, that we feel for our own salvation ; and that in coincidence with this feeling, as we should always have our minds fixed upon our own salvation, and employ all practicable means to secure it, so we

should never lose sight of the good of others ; but be ready to watch over them for their good, to labour for them, to make sacrifices for them, and in all things, by our conduct to show, that we are under the influence of that same benign, and heavenly spirit, which led the blessed Saviour to the cross, and to the grave. It would be well for us ever to recollect, that the Divine Redeemer, in the expansive benevolence of his heart, did not fix his eye on us, more than on others, nor less on us, than others ; but, that he regarded man as a creature of exalted endowments, and interesting destiny ; and thence, to lay the basis of his salvation, was willing to shed his own blood.

Let the man then, who would bring every thing about him to bear upon his own private and personal good, blush, when he contemplates the disinterested affection of Jesus Christ, that precious Redeemer, by whom he hopes to be saved. Let him feel, that so long as his heart does not throb with benevolent emotions, when he contemplates the character and destinies of those, who, together with himself, are pressing their way to the eternal world, he has nothing of that spirit that inspired the bosom of his Master, and under the influence of which, he

“ Entered the iron gates of death,  
And tore the bars away.”

Let him feel, in solemn conclusion, with respect to himself, “ *that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*”

How immense the difference between the spirit of the world, and the spirit of Christ. The former looks exclusive-



ly upon its own things ; the latter, not indifferent to its own things, looks also upon the things of others. The former, makes self the centre of its desires and efforts ; the latter, in the broad compass of benevolent feeling, regards the good of being. The former would persuade itself of love to God, only as he is the source of happiness ; the latter admires the character of God as intrinsically and supremely lovely. The former is the spirit of the natural man ; the latter the spirit of the new born child of God. The former is supported by the policy of the world ; the latter comes to us bearing the impress of the Divinity. The former is the spirit of the pit ; the latter reigns through the mansions of blessedness. The former would make as many separate interests as there are separate existing beings ; the latter would fix, with an intensity of ardour and effort, the affections of the intelligent universe upon one object, and that object, the ever blessed God.

It is the spirit of the world that can look with cold indifference upon prevailing iniquity, and see the dessolations and ravages of sin among our race, and make not an effort to impede its march to ruin.

Did I say that the spirit of the world can look ? No, my friends, there is no indifferent looking on possible to man in this state of trial. All are employed, on one, or the other side, in this solemn concern. The sentiment of the text, does most unequivocally condemn as ungodly, that spirit that says, “ let the world take care of itself, and I will take care of myself. Every man must see to his own concerns.” How does such a spirit as this compare with the illustrious exam-



ple with which the apostle enforces the duty enjoined in the text ? Had the blessed Saviour felt thus with regard to fallen man, how pitiable, this day, would have been the condition of the human family ! How full of gloom and darkness our prospects for eternity !

There is something God-like in the benevolence that goes out to contemplate the miseries of man ; and that employs its energies to relieve them.

That exhibition of the Divine Being, above all other displays he has made of himself, is prominent and distinguishing, where we see him bending from his throne of glory, and in the attitude of heavenly mercy, in the person of his Son, reaching down his arms to secure a sinking world from ruin. Here were no claims on the part of man. Here were no obligations on the part of God. All was mercy—All was love. This act of self-moved, unsolicited benevolence on the part of our Maker, will constitute a subject of devout thought, and thankful song, so long as the hearts of the children of redemption shall be capable of grateful emotion, and the bosoms of angels shall be the seat of sublime and ingenuous sentiment. In this particular the Divine Saviour invites us, by our conduct, to bear a resemblance to our Father who is in heaven, who, with infinite care and kindness, bestows his blessings liberally, even upon the evil, and unthankful.

It is not for us, under any circumstances, to sit down, and look upon the moral waste and ruin of our world, and think that we have nothing to do ; no efforts to make, to restore to submission and obedience, the revolted and rebellious

subjects of our Sovereign, by whom we are surrounded.

It is treason against heaven, to feel a spirit of indifference, if this were possible, when we survey the ravages which sin is making, and its bold and daring trespass on the authority of the Most High.

The heart that is not influenced by love to God, and the souls of men, to seek his glory, and their salvation, has never been moulded after the image of Christ, nor felt the power of benevolent emotion.

The curse, above all others, which a benevolent man would dread, would be, to be insensible to the miseries of others ; and too much absorbed in his own private interest, to be willing to make an effort, to relieve the woes of his fellow men. No, he sees hopeless grief, and weeps over it.—Iniquity in triumph, and throws obstacles in its way. He anticipates the approaching ruin of the impenitent, and warns him of his danger. He beholds the faithful desponding, and strengthens them. His heart always goes beyond his capacity for accomplishment ; and he carries in secret to his God, what lies out of the field of his own labour, and prays that a blessing may rest on the efforts of other hands, employed in the sublime design of bringing the world into subjection to the obedience of Christ.

#### REMARKS.

1. If what has been said be true, no man can live to himself, exclusively, without contracting exceeding great guilt. The relations, under which divine providence has placed him, create obligations which he cannot disregard, without

treating his Maker with a most shameful neglect and indifference.

What an unhappy, and unenviable spirit is that, which leads a man to overlook the interests of his fellow beings, except as they may be rendered subservient to his personal views and projects.

Look upon mankind involved in one common condemnation, by reason of a common revolt from God. Look at the common circumstances of our being ; all dependent ; all liable to disappointment ; to severe reverses ; to affliction and grief ; and all pressing our way onward to the grave, and to the scenes of the last day : And is there nothing in all these things to awaken kind and benevolent emotions ?

Contemplate, also, as a further excitement to a tender recollection of obligation, the common principles of our physical and moral constitution. Remember that high, and refined, and delicate feeling is not confined to any particular class, or description of men. That the agony of grief is as poignant in the bosom of the poor widow, shut out from the view of society, by means of the obscurity of her lot, as in the bosom of that more favoured female, who has a plentiful store, and is surrounded with weeping, and sympathizing friends. The poor man is not incapable of feeling, when he looks upon his little family, growing up into the world without expectation, because he is poor. His poverty has not robbed him of the heart of a father. No, if this were its effect, then, were poverty a double curse. All men have not the same natural endowments of mind, as it regards extent, or largeness

of capacity ; nor are they born under the same advantages ; nor do they come upon the stage with the same inviting and encouraging prospects : But are the unfortunate, the artless, the improvident, therefore, incapable of happiness, and undeserving regard ? Who hath made us to differ ? God, in his wise and inscrutable providence, has established this diversified allotment in human concerns, doubtless, for the purpose of exhibiting the sovereignty of his hand in his dispensations towards his creatures ; and also, to furnish an opportunity for the human heart to exhibit itself, in that department of moral action, that regards the conduct and feelings of men towards each other.

I say not, that you shall make no discriminations between men of different character and conduct ; that you shall pronounce guilt, innocence ; and sloth, activity ; and improvidence, prudent foresight : But, I do say, that every ingenuous feeling of nature coincides with what the gospel demands, when it tells you, that you are solemnly bound to do all in your power, to improve the moral character of society by suppressing guilt, and promoting activity, industry and virtue in community.

Nor is this great duty discharged, when we are willing to clear off our hands, what providence has thrown in our way. Our activity, in such cases, may arise, wholly, from selfishness, that we may, the more speedily, rid ourselves of the burthen. The spirit of the gospel requires, that we should make it our business, a part of our daily concern, to do good. Not merely to promote our own objects, but to do something

for the good of our species, if possible, or at least, for the good of those, with whom the providence of God has associated us. Our views of duty are to this day exceedingly limited, and our sphere of benevolent action very much circumscribed, if we have never felt the force of this obligation.

Hence we observe—

2. That if what has been said be true, every man should feel himself the guardian of the publick welfare. And what a different state of things would soon exist, to give delight to the generous principles of our nature, if this should become, in any considerable measure, the publick sentiment ? How soon would abundance store the houses of poverty and want ; the appearance of comfort and prosperity, take the place of wretchedness and rags ; our streets no longer be crowded with profane, bloated drunkards ; and the children of the ungodly, rescued from ruin, look forward with hope, to respectability and usefulness. How would the afflicted female dry up her tears, and rejoice in the restoration of her dissolute husband ; and the children that had been without bread, smile around the board of plenty, and wonder at the change. How would the monster sin cease to feed on the life's blood of man ; and sinners, disenthralled from the bondage of corruption, rejoice in the privileges of the sons of God. Earth, renovated by the genius of benevolence, would pay her united homage to the King immortal ; and songs of praise, from men of every tongue, rise like sweet incense to his throne. O, may the love of God constrain us, that we may be the willing instruments, in promoting a result, so glorious !















